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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS OF NAZARETH:
A SOCIO-HISTORICAL STUDY**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the University's requirements
for the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy**

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**Coventry University in collaboration with
Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.**

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine and critically evaluate the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth, with special reference to baptism and to the question of whether Jesus practised a baptising ministry in Galilee. This involves us taking a fresh look at the Gospel texts on John and Jesus and considering the possible relevance of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Part I provides a preliminary examination of our sources. Part II focuses on possible links between John, the Essenes and the early Church. We argue: (i) that after his birth into a priestly family, John was probably brought up by the Essenes at Qumran, whom he later left to conduct an independent prophetic and baptising ministry by the Jordan; (ii) that the Qumran immersions provide the matrix to John's baptismal rite; (iii) that the affinity between the Essenes and the early Church in ideology and praxis may be owing to the influence of the former upon the latter, with John as the mediator between the two.

Against this background, John and Jesus are directly related to each other in Part III. We conclude: (i) that after his baptism by John, Jesus remained a follower of John for a time, and practised a baptising ministry concurrent with that of John in Judea (John 3.22-26; 4.1-2); (ii) that Jesus continued this ministry in Galilee; (iii) that the synoptists' silence about Jesus' baptising (e.g. Mk 6.7-13 and par; Matt 10.5-16; Q=Matt 9.37-38/Lk 10.1-12) may indicate that they took it for granted, or that they were embarrassed by it; (iv) that unlike fasting, sabbath observance, tithes and offerings, purity, etc, baptism was not among the contentious issues relating to Jewish law; (v) that the emphasis on baptism in the post-Easter context of the Church was necessitated by its redefinition in the name of Jesus (Acts 2.38; 19.1-7; Rom 6.3; Gal 3.27; cf. the Trinitarian formula in Matt 28.19 [cf. Mk 16.15-16]); and (vi) that perhaps the strongest argument for John as mediator between the Essenes, Jesus and the early Church is precisely the ambivalence of the New Testament writers' attitude toward him.

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The gestation of this work can be traced to the closing stage of my postgraduate studies at St Mary's College, University of St Andrews, Scotland, in 1991. But it was in the Oxford office of Dr David Wenham, my supervisor, that the present shape took place. David provided invaluable assistance and stimulation throughout the course of this study. His critical mind, depth of knowledge and incisive comments have helped me focus the issues more clearly, sharpen the arguments and think creatively. Apart from being my *Doktorvater*, Dr David Wenham offered me pastoral support during the hard and tortuous and, sometimes, uncertain moments in the course of this research. To David and his wife, Clare, I say thank you.

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I dedicate this work to my parents, who planted in me, from an early age, the seed of the Christian faith. It is this faith that has kept me through thick and thin to this day. My father, who died last year after a short illness, knew of my struggles with this research. He would have loved to see its successful completion. May his soul rest in peace until the great reunion on that resurrection morning.

DECLARATIONS

None of the material in the present work has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

While registered as a candidate for the University of Coventry's Ph.D. degree, I have not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institutions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ALUOS	<i>Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ANZSTR	Australian and New Zealand Studies in Theology and Religion
AS	<i>American Scholar</i>
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATLA	American Theological Library Association
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BNZW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BSt	Biblische Studien
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Review</i>
BTS	<i>Bible et Terre Sainte</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCWJCW	Cambridge Commentaries on the Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200
CGNT	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
CRINT	Compendia rerum judaicarum ad novum testamentum
CSCT	Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DJD	<i>Discoveries in the Judaean Desert</i>
DJG	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i> (eds. J. B. Green <i>et al.</i>)
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries: A Journal of Current Research on the Scrolls and Related Literature</i>
EBC	<i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
EJ	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> (eds. C. Roth <i>et al.</i>)
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HDB	<i>Hastings Dictionary of the Bible</i> (eds. J. Hastings <i>et al.</i>)

HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HeyJ	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IRT	<i>Issues in Religion and Theology</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> (eds. G. W. Bromiley <i>et al.</i>)
ITQ	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MHUC	Monographs of the Hebrew Union College
MNTC	Moffat New Testament Commentary
MPEB	<i>The Marshall Pickering Encyclopedia of the Bible</i> (ed. W. A. Elwell)
MT	Masoretic Text (of the OT)
NCB	New Century Bible Commentary
NIDNTT	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> (ed. C. Brown)
NIGTC	New International Greek New Testament Commentary
NT	New Testament
NTA	<i>New Testament Apocrypha</i> (ed. W. Schneemelcher)
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
NumenSup	Numen Supplements

OT	Old Testament
OTP	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (ed. J. H. Charlesworth)
OUP	Oxford University Press
PC	Proclamation Commentaries
RB	<i>Review Biblique</i>
RQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SBAZ	Studien zur Biblischen Archäologie und Zeitgeschichte
SBL	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBL SBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SE	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monographs Series
SUNT	Studien der Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (eds. G. Kittel <i>et al</i>)
THNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
ThS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
ThToday	<i>Theology Today</i>
ThZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

DEAD SEA SCROLLS

List of Document Numbers and Names referred to in this study. For detailed classification, see J. H. Charlesworth *et al*, eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (1994), pp. 180-85; Martínez, *DSST*, vii-xvii.

CD <i>Damascus Document</i>	4Q252-54=4QpGen ^{a-c} <i>Patriarchal - Blessing</i>
1QH <i>Thanksgiving Hymns</i>	4Q285 <i>Isaianic Fragment</i>
1QM <i>War Scroll</i>	4Q491-496=4QM <i>War Scroll</i>
1QpHab <i>Habakkuk Pesher</i>	4Q318 <i>Zodiology and Brontology</i>
1QS <i>Rule of the Community</i>	4Q521 <i>Messiah of Heaven and Earth (on the Resurrection)</i>
1QSa <i>Messianic Rule</i>	4Q542=4QTQahat ar <i>Testament of Qahat</i>
3Q15 <i>Copper Scroll</i>	4Q543-548 <i>Visions of Amram^{a-f}</i>
4Q156=4QtgLev <i>Targum on Leviticus</i>	11Q5=11QPs ^{a-b} <i>Apocryphal Psalms</i>
4Q157=4QtgJob <i>Targum on Job</i>	11Q13=11QMelch <i>Heavenly Prince of Melchizedek</i>
4Q161-165=4QpIsa ^{a-e} <i>Isaiah Pesher</i>	11Q19-20=11QT ^{a-b} <i>Temple Scroll</i>
4Q174=4QFlor <i>Florilegium</i>	
4Q175=4QTest <i>Testimonies</i>	
4Q246 <i>An Aramaic Apocalypse (Son of God)</i>	

Abbreviations for Biblical, Intertestamental, and Classical Literature are self-evident.

For abbreviations of titles of tractates in Mishnaic and related literature, see H. Danby trans. *The Mishnah*, (OUP, 1933), 806.

Unless otherwise indicated, all the NT Greek and English citations are from *The Greek NT* 3rd edn. (UBS, 1983) and *The RSV Interlinear Greek–English NT* (Bagster and Sons, 1985), respectively.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Orientation

Since the beginning of the late nineteenth century, and in particular from the dawn of the twentieth century, students of the NT have increasingly recognised that the history of early Christianity begins in an important sense with John the Baptist,¹ and that there was some form of relationship between JB and Jesus. While Jesus is the protagonist and the focus of attention in the narrative framework of the four canonical Gospels,² the historical significance of John is clearly attested in the Gospel tradition.

There appears to be a consensus among the four canonical Gospels about some of the features regarding the ministry of JB, especially his role as a forerunner, baptiser and prophet. Furthermore, all four Evangelists see John standing, in some sense, at the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mk 1.1-11; Matt 3.1-17; 11.7-11, 14-19; Lk 1.5-66; 3.1-20; 7.24-35; John 1.1-42). Beyond this general picture, however, there are considerable divergences among the Gospel material.

1.1.1 Divergences

As shown below, the difficulty of delineating the relationship between JB and Jesus stems from a degree of ambivalence on the part of our primary witnesses, the canonical Gospels. While some passages underline John's significance as a historical figure in his own right, others stress his inferiority to Jesus. For example, Matthew expands the short Marcan account of the baptismal scene with a dialogue between JB and Jesus (Matt 3.13-14). John is hesitant about the propriety of baptising Jesus; he

¹ Hereafter abbreviated JB. John is mentioned about ninety times in the NT, exceeded in frequency only by Jesus, Paul and Peter. See W. Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* SNTSMS 7 (Cambridge: CUP, 1968), p. 107 note 1.

² In this study I shall identify the authors of the Gospels by the names they bear, or by the terms 'first Gospel or Evangelist' and 'fourth Gospel or Evangelist'. In doing so I shall not be making any assertion regarding the actual identity of the authors. The terms 'first' or 'fourth Gospel' merely refer to the sequence of the Gospels in the NT, not to the order in which they were written. I use these terms for the sake of convenience. For a recent introductory discussion on how the Gospel material originated, was written and assigned names, see E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 58-66.

thus baptises Jesus only after he is overruled by Jesus' words: Ἄφες ἄρτι, οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην. τότε ἀφίησιν αὐτόν (Matt 3.15). What is the meaning of this statement?

Further ambivalence over JB appears in Matt 11.11//Lk 7.28: οὐκ ἐγγίγερται ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν μείζων Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ· ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν. Here the reference to him combines a remarkable tribute with an enigmatic note of depreciation. Can we detect any tension over the figure of JB in the early Church?

The problem which the baptism of Jesus by JB caused the early Church can again be discerned in Luke's account. First, the third Evangelist relates the imprisonment of JB before the baptism of Jesus, without describing the circumstances leading to the imprisonment and death of JB, which we find both in Mark and to a lesser extent in Matthew (Lk 3.19-20; cf. Mk 6.14-29; Matt 14.1-13). Secondly, in the baptismal scene, Luke does not tell us who baptised Jesus (Lk 3.21). There is no reference at all to John's role. Without Mark or Matthew, the baptism of Jesus by JB could only be deduced by inference in Luke's Gospel.

In the fourth Gospel, JB is presented first and foremost as the ideal Christian witness and forerunner of Jesus (John 1.6-8, 23). The Gospel makes no mention of JB's prophetic appearance, nor is there any account of his arrest, imprisonment and decapitation at the hands of Herod Antipas referred to by the synoptists. The fourth Evangelist, however, knows not only of a period of contact after JB has baptised Jesus, but also suggests that their ministries ran concurrently, at least for a period prior to John's incarceration, when Jesus engaged in a baptising activity (John 3.22-24).

1.1.2 *Questions*

The portrait of JB and Jesus in the Gospel accounts presents a whole gamut of questions which merit close scrutiny:

- (i) How did the early Church define itself over and against the followers of JB?

Was Jesus a disciple of JB?

(ii) How closely did Jesus align himself with the nature of John's mission? Did Jesus initially begin his public ministry with a firm commitment to John and later on develop his own distinctive message and movement which were radically different from John's?

(iii) Was Jesus' ministry a continuation of that of JB?

(iv) Why are the synoptists silent about Jesus' Judean ministry described in the fourth Gospel? Is this silence a subtle attempt by the synoptists to avoid any reference to the baptising activity of Jesus described by the fourth Evangelist?

(v) Did Jesus' ministry take a radical turn when he came to Galilee (Mk 1.14 and par)?

(vi) Did Jesus continue to baptise in Galilee? Or did Jesus start baptising like JB and then stop later on in his ministry? If he did continue, why this deafening silence by the Evangelists, particularly in the mission discourses? In short, how far does John's ministry contribute to our understanding of the origins of Jesus' ministry?

(vii) Is there any evidence to suggest that the Jesus movement was a direct outgrowth of the Baptist movement?

(viii) In any case how far can we trust our sources?

Related to the above issues is the important question of JB's possible links with the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls.³ It has been proposed that there is some historical connection between JB and the Essene community at Qumran: both appealed to Isaiah 40.3; both called for repentance and observed the rite of baptism; both anticipated the imminent appearance of a unique figure and the 'kingdom of God'; both employed similar language (often replete with the terminology of Jewish apocalyptic); and both berated the religious authorities of the day.

The Lucan infancy narratives indicate that John was born into a priestly family in Judea, and that he remained 'in the wilderness till his manifestation to Israel' (Lk 1.5-80). What is the son of a temple priest doing in the wilderness in his tender years? Furthermore, when he came of age to exercise his priestly office, John was not to be

³ Hereafter abbreviated DSS.

found in the temple like his father, but in the desert as an ascetic prophet, proclaiming and administering the rite of 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' in the Jordan (Mk 1.4-5 and par). Clearly, we must explore the historical possibility that JB was, at some point in his life, a member of the Qumran sect. This in turn leads us to consider the possibility, according to the fourth Gospel, that Jesus may have remained for sometime as JB's disciple, practising the rite of baptism (John 3.22-24; 4.1-2). We propose to take a further look at the role of baptism in Jesus' Galilean ministry.

1.2 A Survey of Previous Work

Since the beginning of the second half of this century, a number of monographs focusing specifically on JB and Jesus have appeared in which the vexed question of the relationship between the two figures is briefly discussed (e.g. Kraeling's *John the Baptist* (1950); Scobie's *John the Baptist* (1964); Schütz' *Johannes der Täufer* (1967); Wink's *John the Baptist* (1968); Becker's *Johannes der Täufer* (1972); Ernst's *Johannes der Täufer* (1989); Webb's *John the Baptizer and Prophet* (1991); and Backhaus' *Die 'Junkerkreis' des Täufers Johannes* (1991). Other recent and more narrowly focused studies on John's role in the ministry of Jesus have included those of Eta Linnemann, B. F. Meyer, P. W. Hollenbach, E. P. Sanders, J. Murphy-O'Connor, J. D. Crossan and R. L. Webb.⁴

We cannot review all of these studies, but will consider a representative sample in order to put in perspective the state of current research on the question of the relationship between JB and Jesus, and to highlight our distinctive contribution to this debate.

⁴ E. Linnemann, 'Jesus und der Täufer', in G. Ebeling *et al.* eds., *Festschrift für Ernst Fuchs* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973), pp. 219-36; B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979); P. W. Hollenbach, 'The Conversion of Jesus: From Jesus the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer', in H. Temporini and W. Haase eds., *ANRW* 2.25 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1982), pp. 196-219; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), pp. 61-211; J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypotheses', *NTS* 36 (1990), 359-74; J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991); Webb, 'John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus', in B. Chilton and C. A. Evans eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluation of the State of Current Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 179-229.

1.2.1 C. H. Kraeling

In his book, *John the Baptist*, Kraeling devotes a brief chapter specifically to the question of the relationship between JB and Jesus.⁵ He posits that the early Christians preserved the Baptist tradition not because of the prominence of John in their day or generation, but because they were convinced that Jesus and John really belonged together. Jesus himself not only panegyricizes JB, but also accords him a place in the divine schema of salvation. John's subordination and inferior status, as a forerunner to Jesus, was a later development born out of the early Church's faith in Jesus as Christ and Lord. Consequently, Kraeling postulates three requirements in any attempt for a correct interpretation of the data on the relation between John and Jesus: (i) to understand the nature of the basic formula that John is the divinely appointed forerunner of Jesus; (ii) to make proper allowance for the qualifying factors that Christian thinking and Christian faith have introduced into the relation between the two figures and to establish a residuum of inescapable fact; and (iii) to give the residuum its proper place in a possible historical development.

Kraeling applies the above three interpretive principles and procedures to the narratives and sayings of the encounters between JB and Jesus in the Gospels. For example, with regard to the encounter between John and Jesus in the Lucan infancy narratives (Lk 1.39-56), Kraeling posits that this story reflects the struggle between Christian and Baptist loyalties. Here is an effort by the Christian disciples to depict the superiority of Jesus. This conclusion, however, is not meant to suggest that the story is deprived of all evidential value. Kraeling observes:

...for behind the story is the perfectly valid fundamental assumption that John and Jesus stand in relation to each other. What has happened in this case, as so often in popular religious tradition, is that a personal relation between two people, known to be an important historical fact, is projected back into their own antecedents on the assumption that this will prevent the relationship from being misinterpreted as fortuitous and incidental. Seen in this light, the story is a testimony to an important Christian conviction and a conviction that is fundamentally sound, for certainly what brought Jesus and John together was not coincidence.⁶

⁵ C. H. Kraeling, *John the Baptist* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 123-57.

⁶ Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, pp. 126-27.

Kraeling turns his attention to the other occasions in the Gospel account where, as adults, both Jesus and JB encounter each other. These are at the baptism of Jesus (Mk 1.9-11 and par); the two brief encounters when John sees and testifies of Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1.29, 36); and when John, now in prison, dispatches a delegation of his disciples to Jesus (Matt 11.2-6//Lk 7.18-23). Kraeling notes that the Johannine evidence affords JB the opportunity to witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God, and to urge his disciples to transfer their allegiance to Jesus. With regard to the account of John's delegation to Jesus, in which he expresses his doubts about Jesus' Messianic status, Kraeling argues that the story shows traces 'of the early Christians' own effort to resolve the problem of faith and history, and to this extent appears to provide little evidence of historical value for our knowledge of the contacts between John and Jesus'.⁷ Kraeling, however, attributes much historical credibility to the episode of Jesus' baptism. On this he postulates:

Here we are on the most solid historical ground, for only one who had himself accepted baptism at John's hands could have spoken of the Baptist as Jesus did, and no one of Jesus' followers, disturbed as they were by the conflict between their faith and that of John's adherents, would have invented an episode that seemed to subordinate their Master to John. Quite possibly...there were other occasions when the two men came into contact...Here, however, is the encounter that is all-important and the Gospel record continued to keep it so until the pre-existence doctrine began to dim the memory of crucial moments that moulded the course of Jesus' life and thought as they had that of the prophets before him.⁸

While Kraeling admirably discusses some of the relevant Gospel passages on JB and Jesus, he fails to offer a critical evaluation of the Johannine evidence for the overlapping baptising ministries of both figures in Judea (John 3.22-24; 4.1-2), a period which is not referred to by the synoptists.

1.2.2 C. H. H. Scobie

Another attempt to evaluate the relationship between JB and Jesus, as presented by the Gospel evidence, has been made by Scobie.⁹ Though short and telescoped, Scobie's discussion offers a consistent and critical assessment of the Gospel evidence.

⁷ Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, pp. 130-31.

⁸ Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, pp. 131-32.

⁹ C. H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (London: SCM, 1964), pp. 142-62.

Noting the somewhat ambivalent, inconsistent and contradictory nature of the Gospel data, Scobie begins his discussion with what he calls 'two of the best attested facts of the New Testament', namely, that Jesus was baptised by John, and that Jesus later spoke very highly of John.¹⁰ Scobie further considers the Johannine evidence for the period of overlapping ministries during which Jesus baptised as well as John (John 3.22, 26; 4.1). During this period, Jesus closely associated with John until they moved apart, though not necessarily because of any antagonism or rivalry between them. It was also not a definite break, but one precipitated possibly by John's arrest.

Scobie further notes the differences between John and Jesus: JB was an ascetic, while Jesus was not; John operated mainly in the wilderness, while Jesus interacted freely with people in towns and villages, even entering the homes of marginalised and notorious sinners; JB's message had at its core an invitation to escape the imminent judgment by accepting his ethical proclamation, while Jesus' message was essentially the Gospel, the good news; JB's ethical preaching was typically Jewish, while Jesus demanded a more radical ethic; John preached a 'kingdom' still to come, whereas for Jesus the 'kingdom' was partially present, already breaking in; the law may have held a central place in John's preaching, in addition to his own practices of prayer and fasting, while Jesus accepted the law in a sense, but overruled it with his own teaching.

Scobie proposes three possible lines of explanation for the above differences and of Jesus' high opinion of JB in the Gospel tradition:

(a) Jesus began as a disciple of John, but later developed his own distinctive thought as he embarked on an independent ministry.

(b) Jesus and John largely agreed in their fervent eschatological expectations. Both were convinced of the need for decision, repentance, an ethical and righteous lifestyle, as well as a life lived in service of God.

(c) While Jesus approved of John, he did not accept every detail of John's preaching and teaching. Jesus did not accept John's ministry as part of the kingdom (Matt 11.13//Lk 16.16). John had a place in God's purposes, but he was only a stage

¹⁰ Scobie, *John the Baptist*, p. 142.

in the process which found its eventual fulfilment in Jesus. The early Christians may therefore have correctly read Jesus' attitude to John when they portrayed John as the herald and precursor of the 'kingdom'.

While Scobie's commendable and perceptive analysis of the Gospel evidence gives us some insight into the relationship between JB and Jesus, it is significant that he does not say anything about what happened to the rite of baptism when Jesus began his independent ministry in Galilee. Did the development of Jesus' thought end this rite which he had held in common with John?

1.2.3 *W. Wink*

While the above summaries have attempted in varying ways to shed some light on the relationship between JB and Jesus, it is to the merit of Wink's work that he argues persuasively for a real link between John and Jesus. Wink's application of redaction-criticism to each Evangelist's appropriation of the tradition about John formed a milestone in the scholarly quest for an appropriate working hypothesis concerning the relations between John's movement and the early Church.

According to Wink, 'the church stood at the center of John's movement from the beginning and became its one truly great survivor and heir'.¹¹ John's disciples were initially regarded fraternally by the early Christian Church. While there is an element of polemic and apologetic against the Baptist movement, it is of secondary importance and does not adequately explain the Evangelists' preoccupation with John. In fact, it is likely that the groups that became the object of the Church's polemics and apologetics at the end of the first century A.D. were neither connected with John's work, nor posed any serious threat to the missionary activity of the early Church.

Another important conclusion from Wink's work is that John is 'the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and all of the Christian elaborations are but the theological expression of a historical fact, that through John's mediation Jesus perceived the nearness of the kingdom and his own relation to its coming'.¹² Furthermore, as each

¹¹ Wink, *John the Baptist*, p. 110.

¹² Wink, *John the Baptist*, p. 113.

Evangelist developed the tradition about John in the light of urgent contemporary needs, faithfulness was maintained to the image of JB as formulated by Jesus in Q. On the whole, John was used 'typologically by the church as a means of setting forth its conception of its own role in "preparing the way of the Lord"'.¹³

However, like the preceding work, Wink's study lacks a clear direction on the role of baptism in Jesus' ministry, and the insight it affords us into the relationship between JB and Jesus.

1.2.4 P. W. Hollenbach

Hollenbach has also attempted to explore what brought about the shift in Jesus' ministry from Baptiser, in close association with John's movement, to (Jesus the) Healer.¹⁴ Hollenbach begins his discussion with a summary of his results from an earlier study on JB.¹⁵ According to Hollenbach, JB did not only suffer the outrages of the urban priestly aristocracy on the country clergy, but also became alienated from the status quo. John abandoned society for a life in the wilderness of Judea, probably at Qumran, from where he launched his radical prophetic-apocalyptic ministry. In view of the impending judgment, and the coming eschatological figure, he called for repentance, an ethical lifestyle and baptism. Some of John's converts stayed with him, forming an identifiable group, which practised various forms of piety such as fasting and prayer. John and his movement were perceived as a threat to Antipas who eventually arrested and executed him.

Hollenbach now turns his attention to Jesus. Among those who came to John for baptism was Jesus. After his baptism, Jesus became a disciple and co-worker of JB for an unspecified period of time. In the course of his association with JB, Jesus experienced a 'conversion' to new practices and to the proclamation of a message distinctively different from that of JB. According to Hollenbach, the change in focus of Jesus' ministry was caused by a realisation of his power to heal and exorcise. This led

¹³ Wink, *John the Baptist*, p. 113.

¹⁴ Hollenbach, 'The Conversion of Jesus', 196-219.

¹⁵ Hollenbach, 'Social Aspects of John the Baptizer's Preaching Mission in the Context of Palestinian Judaism', in *ANRW* 2 19, 1 (1979), pp. 850-75.

Jesus to question the necessity of continuing to baptise people for repentance, now that the sick and the oppressed were being visited directly by God. Why should one fast, pray and continue to stay in the wilderness anticipating a final purification when people were already enjoying God's gracious restoration of life? In Jesus' exorcisms and healings, people were now experiencing the presence of the 'kingdom of God' (Lk 11.20//Matt 12.20). Hence John's message and activities were now irrelevant to Jesus, who no longer had to look forward to a messianic figure, or to seek God through the practice of religious ritual: God himself was now visiting his people.

Hollenbach's work is important in many respects, not least in noting the originally strong connection between JB and Jesus. However, he exaggerates the growing differences between Jesus and John. His study fails to offer a convincing explanation for Jesus' high estimation of JB, his identification with and practice of JB's baptism, as well as its continued prominence in the post-Easter context of the Church.

1.2.5 *E. P. Sanders*

Another significant contribution is that of Sanders. He argues from the premise that the cleansing of the temple by Jesus was a symbolic, prophetic act to indicate its destruction and subsequent rebuilding by God at the eschaton. Jesus must be understood within the framework of the Jewish eschatological expectation that God would soon bring about the restoration of Israel. This expectation is exemplified in Jesus' activities and teaching. According to Sanders, Jesus, within this context of an eschatological expectation of restoration, should be placed in a continuum extending from John to the early Church. Jesus began his ministry as a follower of John (an eschatological prophet who exhorted his audience to repentance and baptism in view of the imminent kingdom).¹⁶

Sanders points out the differences between John and Jesus: while John preached repentance, Jesus offered sinners the possibility of entering the imminent kingdom 'without requiring repentance as normally understood' (i.e. repentance demonstrated by

¹⁶ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 61-119. See also Meyer, *Aims*, pp. 115-123.

an atoning sacrifice in the temple and restitution). All that was required was their preparedness to follow him.¹⁷

Sanders' perceptive study not only highlights the eschatological orientation of Jesus, but also the significant relationship between Jesus and John. He also accentuates the differences between JB and Jesus (e.g. the question about fasting and prayer, Mk 2.18-22 and par; Lk 11.1-4; cf. Matt 6.5-15).¹⁸ According to Sanders, a fundamental difference between the two figures is that while 'John was the spokesman for repentance and righteousness ordinarily understood, Jesus, equally convinced that the end was at hand, proclaimed the inclusion of the wicked who heeded him'.¹⁹

However, it is significant to note that the sinners, the destitute, the sick and the despised – including tax collectors and soldiers – who were included in the kingdom (Mk 1.21-2.17 and par; Matt 4.17; 21.28-32) were the very class of people who accepted JB's message and its concomitant call to repentance (Matt 3.7-10; Lk 3.7-14). Presumably it was this same receptive group – now including Herod – which perceived Jesus to be John-*redivivus* (Mk 6.14-16 and par). It is shown below that the cumulative evidence for the striking affinity between John and Jesus makes it likely that Jesus' offer of the kingdom to sinners was based on their acceptance of John's proclamation of 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins', a message which Jesus himself endorsed, and which, though redefined after the Easter event (now in the name of Jesus Christ), remained essentially the same after the Easter event.

1.2.6 *J. Ernst*

We now move on to consider Ernst's comprehensive attempt to examine all the available traditions concerning JB. According to Ernst, John's origin was probably a country priestly family, but his main role, as attested by his ascetic lifestyle, wilderness ministry and baptising activity in the Jordan, was that of a prophet. In his wilderness location, JB announced the coming of a superior, mightier figure, whom he identified

¹⁷ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 206, 175-211.

¹⁸ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 206-207; Hollenbach, 'The Conversion of Jesus' pp. 196-219.

¹⁹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 206.

as God himself. John may, therefore, have perceived himself as a forerunner of God in the light of Isa 40.3.

Moreover, his prophetic preaching was not apocalyptic, as he was not concerned with proclaiming an imminent end of the world through a cosmic conflagration. The emphasis of John's message was a call to repentance and an ethical lifestyle. Those who responded to John's message were asked to seal this change in direction by undergoing the rite of baptism.

John did not set out to make disciples like the later rabbinic teachers. All those who heeded his call of repentance and were baptised became his followers, though some of them remained very close to him as his assistants. John's ministry set him on a collision course with the authorities: he was finally arrested and executed by Herod Antipas.²⁰ It was only after John's death that these followers became an identifiable group, practising his baptism as an initiatory rite into this sectarian community.²¹

On the question of the relationship between JB and Jesus, Ernst writes:

Die Frage nach den Beziehungen zwischen Jesus und dem Täufer hat über den rein historisch-biographischen Aspekt hinaus auch eine religionsgeschichtliche Komponente. Die provozierende Behauptung, der Täufer sei für die Entwicklung des Christentums wichtiger als Jesus, macht immerhin darauf aufmerksam, daß tragende Elemente der christlichen Praxis und Verkündigung schon in der Predigt der Täufer vorgegeben sind. Daß Jesus vor seinem öffentlichen Auftreten mit Johannes Kontakte gepflegt, möglicherweise sogar zu dessen Schülerkreis gehört hätte, ist historisch zwar ungesichert, aber die Zählbarkeit einer derartigen Vermutung wirft doch ein Licht auf eine innere Verwandtschaft, die in der konvergierenden Gerichts-botschaft und Bußpredigt zum Ausdruck kommt.²²

Thus for Ernst, there are questions about the relationship between John and Jesus on the historical level. He questions the conclusion that after his baptism Jesus remained with John and became one of his disciples. Ernst here fails to appreciate the import of Jesus' baptism by John, and the Gospel evidence of the significant relationship between the two figures.²³

²⁰ J. Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation–Geschichte–Wirkungsschichte* BZNW 53 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), pp. 265-346.

²¹ Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, pp. 347-84.

²² Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, pp. 386, 207-10. See also Backhaus, *Die 'Jüngerkreis' des Täufers Johannes: Eine studie zu den religionsgeschichtlichen Ursprüngen des Christentums* (Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1991), pp. 330-34.

²³ See §8.3.

1.2.7 *J. Murphy-O'Connor*

Another interesting contribution to the evaluation of the relationship between JB and Jesus has been made by Murphy-O'Connor.²⁴ He postulates that John's choice of Perea for the commencement of his public ministry (a site associated with the disappearance of Elijah), was a deliberate prophetic gesture to evoke the eschatological day of judgment (though not to give the impression that he was *Elijah-redivivus*). Murphy-O'Connor proposes that Jesus may have encountered JB on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Jesus submitted to John's baptism and became a follower of John for an unspecified period of time. In the course of this period, some of the disciples of John transferred their allegiance to Jesus – probably encouraged by John (John 1.29-51).

From Perea, John relocated his baptising ministry to Aenon near Salim, in Samaria (John 3.23), while Jesus and his disciples moved to Judea to conduct a parallel baptising ministry (John 3.22).

Murphy-O'Connor's perceptive study provides an explanation for the reference to Apollos and the Ephesian disciples who had only received John's baptism (Acts 18.24-19.7). Furthermore, Murphy-O'Connor argues that since both John and Jesus were concerned to address their eschatological message to all Jews, it is quite likely that John also preached and baptised in Galilee. John's earlier ministry in Perea had caused Antipas considerable anxiety. However, in Samaria, John was outside the jurisdiction of Antipas. When John transferred to Antipas' Galilee, he was apprehended and was quickly moved to Machaerus, where he was incarcerated and later executed.

When the news of John's death reached Jesus, he transferred his activity to Galilee to complete the unfinished work of his erstwhile master. According to Murphy-O'Connor, it was at this point in Jesus' baptising ministry in Galilee that he experienced a profound change in himself. Jesus discovered his ability to exorcise. This led to a re-evaluation of his ministry and message, in particular, his understanding of repentance and restitution, in the light of the socio-economic situation of his day.

²⁴ Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus', 359-74.

It is the merit of Murphy-O'Connor's study in noting that Jesus' baptising ministry was conducted not only in Judea, but also in Galilee, and recognising its significance for the overall ministry of Jesus. However, it is unfortunate that Murphy-O'Connor stopped short of making a connection between the baptising activities of John, Jesus and the early Church. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that Jesus' discovery of his ability to exorcise ended his baptising activity. These observations demand critical analysis.

1.2.8 *K. Backhaus*

In his study of the *Jüngerkreis des Täufers Johannes*, Backhaus argues that when the early Church came into being it originally had no specifically Christian self-understanding, nor did it lay claim to anything new. Rather, it saw itself as an authentic form of Judaism, just like the Baptist movement. It is not satisfactory to describe Christianity simply as a splinter group from the Baptist sect. However, Backhaus suggests that a general influence of the Baptist movement on the infant Church is probable, and that many of the theological elements in Christianity are traceable to the Baptist sect (e.g. the praxis of fasting and prayer, as well as the Christology of the early Church, are all rooted in the preaching and mission of JB).²⁵

Backhaus further argues that the concept of a 'Baptist circle' subsumes three different phenomena: the 'Baptist disciples' in the narrow sense, the 'Palestinian Baptist movement', and the 'Syrian Baptist community'. The 'Baptist disciples' in the narrow sense constituted a sort of prophetic school that the historical John had gathered around himself. These disciples actively participated in John's baptism and his eschatologically-motivated penitential fasting and prayer. Some of the first disciples of Jesus came out of this community. However, Jesus himself did not belong to this group of John's disciples. It was probably only after the death of John that the community of these 'inner disciples' became visible, severing its connection with either the synagogue, the Church, or the wider Palestinian Baptist movement.

²⁵ Backhaus, *Jüngerkreis*, pp. 47-112, 188-89, 327-31.

The narrow circle of the 'Baptist disciples' is to be distinguished from the wider Palestinian repentance movement which John had called into being while he was alive. This movement represented a relatively broad trend in late Judaism, which included the 'Jordan prophets' that are encountered from time to time, with their quasi-messianic agenda. According to Backhaus, Jesus may be understood within the milieu of this Palestinian repentance Baptist movement:

Nur wenn die eschatologische Botschaft Jesu im Rahmen der Täuferbewegung gewürdigt wird, läßt sich ihre historisch-soziologische Vermittlung präzise erfassen, ihre theologische Qualität sachgerecht verstehen und ihr Spezifikum deutlicher profilieren. Jesus tritt von seinen Anfängen an als selbständiger Prophet innerhalb der Täuferbewegung auf, freilich ohne jemals selbst zu taufen. Nach seiner eigenen Interpretation ist die βασιλεία-Predigt die in ihr Ziel geführte Täuferbotschaft unter dem Primat der Abba-Theozentrik und mit dem Anspruch der Erfüllung.²⁶

Thus on both historical and redactional-critical grounds Backhaus argues against the Johannine evidence that Jesus carried out a concurrent baptising ministry with John. In his analysis of the historical tradition he observes:

die Synchronizität der Taufen ist die Bedingung der Möglichkeit für die Konkurrenz und damit für den Triumph Jesu (vgl. Joh 3, 26; 4, 1) und das Zeugnis des Täufers (vgl. 3, 27-30). Wenn Jesus selbst getauft hatte, wäre zu erwarten, daß das junge Christentum sich dies aitiologisch zunutze gemacht hätte; statt dessen beruft es sich auf einen nachösterlichen Taufbefehl (Mt 28, 19; vgl. Mk 16, 16). Eine Jüngerschaft Jesu beim Täufer ist definitiv auszuschließen, er wirkte von Anfang an selbständig, und der Verzicht auf den Taufritus des Johannes entsprach nicht nur seiner Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft, sondern wurde durch sie sogar erforderlich. In der Aussendungsrede an die Jünger, die gerade das Wirken Jesu widerspiegelt (vgl. Mk 6, 7-13 parr), fehlt jeder Hinweis auf Taufspendung.²⁷

While Backhaus rightly notes the connection between the Palestinian Baptist movement and the early Church, it is shown below that the relationship between John and Jesus is more profound than Backhaus is willing to allow.

1.2.9 R. L. Webb

Webb's contribution to the research on John helps us to appreciate the significance of his public roles as baptiser and prophet within the social, cultural and

²⁶ Backhaus, *Jüngerkreis*, p. 369.

²⁷ Backhaus, *Jüngerkreis*, p. 263.

historical context of the second temple period.²⁸ According to Webb, John's ministry produced a Jewish sectarian movement. In line with Jewish eschatological expectations, John looked forward to a figure who would act as God's agent for carrying out the task of the judgment and restoration of Israel. John did not expect the 'end of the world', but a gradual renewal of the current socio-historical situation of Palestine. In the course of his ministry John clashed with the religious and political authorities of his day. He was finally arrested, imprisoned and executed by Antipas.

In a recent article, Webb attempts to trace the development of the relationship between John and Jesus.²⁹ His main conclusions may be summarised as follows:

(a) That Jesus' ministry initially stood within the conceptual framework of JB's thought. Jesus began as a baptiser (John 3.22-24), having himself been baptised by John (Mk 1.9-11 and par), and probably remained for some time in the role of a disciple, in close association with John's movement.

(b) While tensions arose between John's disciples and those around Jesus, both men continued to work in harmony with each other (John 3.27-30; 4.1-3). There are no indications of rivalry between them (Mk 11.28-33 and par; Matt 11.9-11//Lk 7.26-28). However, the moment for a shift occurred after the arrest of John, when Jesus moved beyond the initial ministry and conceptual framework of his master in certain respects: (i) John's ascetic tendency is contrasted with Jesus' non-ascetic lifestyle (Mk 1.6; 2.18-22 and par; Matt 11.16-19//Lk 7.31-35); (ii) in addition to fasting, JB taught his disciples certain prayers (cf. Jesus, Lk 11.1; 5.33); (iii) John practised a purificatory rite of baptism, while Jesus stopped baptising; (iv) John's activities were concentrated in the wilderness, while Jesus focused on towns and villages (e.g. Mk 1.38-39 and par); (v) John did no miracles (John 10.41), while Jesus' ministry was characterised by miracle working (Mk 1.32-34 and par).

(c) Nevertheless, at other equally significant points, Jesus remained in continuity with JB. John's ministry provided the springboard for the ministry of Jesus. The

²⁸ R. L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-historical Study* JSNTSup 62 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), esp. pp 379-83.

²⁹ Webb, 'John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus', 179-229.

continuity between them may be seen in that: (i) both men functioned as Jewish prophets; (ii) both were leaders of reform movements whose focus was Israel: they called the people to repent and change direction; (iii) both were opposed to the temple establishment: JB's opposition may be seen in his offer of forgiveness through baptism rather than through the temple rites, while Jesus' opposition is indicated by his action in the temple itself (Mk 11.15-17 and par); (iv) both had disciples; and (v) both suffered a similar fate at the hands of the political authorities (Mk 6.14-29; 15.1-32 and par).

(d) Webb avers, 'we may conclude at the historical level what the early Christians concluded at a theological level: John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus'.

Webb's article is a brilliant synthesis of a number of studies, including those considered above, on the question of the relationship between JB and Jesus. What is debatable is his assertion that one of the points of discontinuity between John and Jesus is that while the former practised a purificatory rite of baptism, the latter abandoned baptism. Yet Webb is willing to grant that 'the early church as a baptising community (e.g. Rom 6.1-4; Acts 2.41) is in continuity with John the Baptist in this respect'.³⁰

The orientation of the above studies shows that both the life and ministry of JB have been in the spotlight of recent scholarship within the larger context of the historical Jesus research. Almost all the recent studies indicate, with varying degrees of emphasis and detail, that John's ministry was the springboard for Jesus' ministry and that there existed a close relationship between the two figures. What is needed now is a more extensive, systematic and critical monograph on the nature of that relationship. This work is an attempt to integrate the studies on both John and Jesus from the standpoint of a critical evaluation of the relationship between the two figures, and the possible influence of John on the shape and bearing of Jesus' ministry. One of our main concerns will be an inquiry into the question of whether Jesus baptised in Judea, as did John, and whether he then continued this rite in his Galilean ministry (with the early Church perpetuating this practice in its post-Easter context).

³⁰ Webb, 'John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus', 227, note 168.

1.3 Scope and Approach

The main issue to be addressed in this dissertation is the question of the relationship between JB and Jesus with special reference to baptism. In particular we will look at the question as to whether Jesus and his disciples carried out a baptising ministry in Galilee. In attempting to address this issue, it will be necessary, first, to take a fresh look at the Gospel texts on JB and Jesus. Secondly, since the discovery of the DSS in 1947, which probably represents the most important biblically related archaeological discovery of this century, and which most scholars now identify as Essenic,³¹ there has been an increased scholarly interest in their possible relevance for the quest of the historical Jesus. We will, therefore, approach our question through a study of the possible connections between Essenism, John, Jesus and the early Church, with supporting evidence from Jewish history, particularly the works of Philo, Josephus and Pliny the Elder, as well as the extra-canonical Gospels.

This means that this work is not a study of all the data concerning Jesus or JB. A detailed study of JB's prophetic ministry falls outside the scope of this work, despite such ministry being referred to as one of the twin public activities which impinged directly on John's baptising ministry. A comprehensive study of John's prophetic and baptising roles within the socio-historical context of late second temple Judaism has been admirably carried out recently by scholars such as Ernst, Webb and Backhaus.

This study is also not concerned to offer a general investigation of the DSS. A good deal of insight has been gained through the ongoing study of a number of scholars and archaeologists. Our primary interest here is to test the hypothesis that John was at some point associated with Qumran. If John is perceived to have links with the Qumran-Essene type community, and to have made such great impact on Christian origins, according to the NT evidence, then we are further encouraged to explore the significance of the close ideological similarities between the Essenes and the early Church, and to reflect on how Jesus, as a follower of John, fits into this picture.

³¹ §3.6

This work consists of three Parts:

Part I (chapters 2 and 3) presents a preliminary examination of our sources, their limitations and usefulness, as well as our assumptions about them for this study.

Part II looks at the question of the possible links between John, the Essenes, and the early Church. Chapter 4 focuses on JB and the Essenes. According to Mark, John began his career in the wilderness of Judea, in a manner resembling that of an ascetic prophet, proclaiming and administering the rite of 'baptism for the forgiveness of sins' in the river Jordan (Mk 1.4-5, 9 and par). The location of JB's activity, the content of his message and his baptismal practice are examined in relation to the evidence from the DSS. The Lucan infancy narratives also indicate that JB was born into a priestly family in Judea and grew up in the wilderness (Lk 1.5-80).³² If the evidence suggests that JB was a member of Qumran, then we are led to a further inquiry as to whether this offers a possible matrix for his baptismal rite, an activity which is later taken up by Jesus.

Chapters 5-7 concentrate on the Essenes and the early Church. Here we take a look at some of the close ideological similarities between the Essenes and the early Church on issues such as: their use of scripture; eschatology; dualism; predetermination; messianism; resurrection and immortality; worship; organisation; discipline, celibacy and divorce. Besides the strong structural and ideological affinities between the two groups, it is further contended, on the basis of literary and archaeological evidence, that there was an Essene quarter in close proximity to the early Christian community in Jerusalem.³³ If these close theological perspectives and ideological similarities point to some connection, direct or indirect, between the Essenes and the early Church, then we have a structure into which Jesus may conveniently fit: Essenism-JB-Jesus-Early Church. Not that our thesis hangs on a possible interconnection between Jesus and the Essenes; nevertheless, it is shown below that there is some plausibility for positing this general continuity.

³² See Appendix.

³³ B. Pixner, 'An Essene Quarter on Mount Zion?' *Studia Hierosolymitana* [*Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* Collectio Major 22] (Jerusalem: Franciscanum Press, 1976), 245-84.

In Part III (the keystone of the thesis), John and Jesus are directly related to each other, as we attempt to examine carefully the possible links between the two men. Chapter 8 looks at the synoptic evidence of John's proclamation of the coming figure. Here we seek to understand John's relationship to the anticipated enigmatic figure and the uniqueness of his baptism, and to establish the figure's possible identity.

Chapter 9 examines the account of the baptism of Jesus by John as given in the canonical Gospels. Further consideration is given to the possibility of Jesus as a second Baptist by looking at John 3.22-26 and 4.1-2, where Jesus is reported to have carried out a baptising activity concurrent with that of John in Judea. The question of Jesus as a disciple of John is taken up at this point. We examine the apparent discontinuation of the baptismal rite by Jesus and his disciples in Galilee, suggested by the lack of reference to it by the Evangelists, particularly in the mission discourse (Mk 6.7-13 and par; Matt 10.5-16; Matt 9.37-38//Lk 10.1-12). The chapter ends by drawing together the different strands of the argument pursued so far in order to define the link between the baptisms of John, Jesus and the post-Easter Church. Chapter 10 summarises the conclusions from previous chapters, noting our contribution to scholarship.

The new openness of scholars on the question of synoptic relationships, and their increasing willingness to take the traditions of the fourth Gospel as historically significant, make this study a promising one.

PART I

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF THE SOURCES

2. THE GOSPEL TRADITIONS AND THEIR RELIABILITY

2.1 Introduction

The four canonical Gospels, together with the DSS, constitute the primary evidence for this study. Reference is also made to some of the extra-canonical Gospels, such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, and the *Gospel of the Nazareans* which, though dated to the first half of the second century A.D., shed some light on some of the questions raised in this research.³⁴

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a preliminary inventory of our main sources for this investigation. We shall proceed as follows: First, we shall look at each Evangelist's presentation of JB and Jesus. In our summary of the Gospel evidence, we shall mark with an *asterisk* any item which is attested in more than one Gospel. Detailed redactional-critical analysis of the relevant texts is reserved for the subsequent chapters. Secondly, we shall make some general observations concerning the usefulness of the Gospel traditions as historical data for this inquiry.

³⁴ It appears that the extra-canonical Gospels follow the structure of the intra-canonical Gospels, and that they were largely written either to supplement or supplant the NT books. Not only are these documents later in date than the canonical Gospels, but some of them also contain material which has been corrupted by a mixture of fables and legends (to a large extent this is not true of the canonical Gospels). Considerable caution is therefore required in using them as evidence for this historical investigation of the relationship between John and Jesus. The references to John and Jesus within Gnostic literature mention John's parents and his birth, his baptism of repentance, his preaching of an imminent figure, the Elijah-*redivivus* motif, and his baptism of Jesus. Other references to John the Baptist and Jesus in the Gnostic literature found in Nag Hammadi Library include, *Exegesis on the Soul* found in codex I, tractate 6 (or NHC II, 6), 135.19-24; *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (NHC VII, 2), 63.26-64.6; *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX, 3), 30.18-31.5; *A Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2), 41.21-38. References to John concerning his role as Elijah-*redivivus* and his baptism also occur in *Pistis Sophia* 7, 60-62, 133, 135. For further discussion, see R. J. Bauckham, 'Gospels (Apocryphal)' *DJG*, pp. 286-91; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, pp. 223-36; W. Schneemelcher ed., *NTA* 2 vols. rev edn. trans R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge: James Clark and Co., 1991-92); J. H. Charlesworth & J. R. Mueller, *The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Guide to Publications* ATLA Bibliography Series 17 (Metuchen, NJ: ATLA and Scarecrow Press, 1987), pp. 198-201, 269-71, 374-402; J. M. Robinson, 'On Bridging the Gulf from Q to the Gospel of Thomas (or Vice Versa)', in C. W. Hedrick & R. Hodgson eds., *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), pp. 127-75; C. M. Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition* ed. J. Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986); D. Wenham ed., *Gospel Perspectives 5: The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985); R. Cameron ed., *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Guildford: Lutterworth, 1982), pp. 23-37; L. E. Keck, 'John the Baptist in Christianized Gnosticism', in C. J. Bleeker ed., *Initiation NumenSup* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), pp. 184-94; R. McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas* (London: Mowbray, 1960).

In this study, we intend to proceed on the methodological assumption of the two-source hypothesis for the synoptic Gospels, which the majority of scholars have followed for almost a century. This theory argues that Mark, the earliest Gospel, was used independently as a written source by Matthew and Luke. In addition, Matthew and Luke also used independently another common source (*Quelle*, either written or oral, commonly abbreviated 'Q') and their own sources. The position adopted in this study is that, at least in their present form, both Matthew and Luke follow the Marcan outline of Jesus' ministry.

Our sympathy with the two-source hypothesis does not necessarily mean that the Marcan traditions are more authentic than their parallels in Matthew and Luke. The possibility must be left open that Matthew and Luke may have more original forms of the Jesus tradition. Each piece of evidence must be assessed and judged on its own merit, and in relation to the others. This recognition opens up new possibilities for our study, particularly for the discussion of individual Gospel passages in which both John and Jesus are juxtaposed.

We are aware of the difficulties with the two-source theory, and of some of the complicated alternative theories that have been proposed in recent years by a number of scholars including E. P. Sanders, M.-É. Boismard, M. D. Goulder and J. W. Wenham, as well as the revival of the Griesbach hypothesis (that Matthew was the earliest Gospel followed by Luke and Mark).³⁵ However, the problems with all these alternative hypotheses seem to outweigh their advantages.

³⁵ Sanders, *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP, 1969); —and M. Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM, 1989), pp. 51-119; P. Benoit and M.-É. Boismard, *Synopse des Quatre Évangiles en français II* (Paris: de Cerf, 1972); M. D. Goulder 'Some Observations on Professor Farmer's "Certain Results..", in C. M. Tuckett ed., *Synoptic Studies: The Ampleforth Conferences of 1982 and 1983 JSNTSup 7* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), pp. 99-109; —'The Order of a Crank', *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 111-30; —*Luke: A New Paradigm* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1989); J. W. Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991). See also Farmer's influential work, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (NY: Macmillan, 1964), in questioning the two-source theory, and advocating a revival of the Griesbach hypothesis. Some of the significant advocates for the two-source hypothesis include D. R. Catchpole, *The Quest for Q* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993); J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); C. M. Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis: An Analysis and Appraisal* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983). For a useful collection of essays on the synoptic problem, see A. J. Bellinzoni ed., *The Two-Source Hypothesis: A Critical Appraisal* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

2.2 A Survey of the Gospel Evidence

It has been pointed out above that the four Gospels agree on a number of features regarding the ministry of John in relation to the subsequent ministry of Jesus, especially on his role as a forerunner, baptiser and prophet, while also showing some serious divergences as each Evangelist uses the available tradition to paint a picture of JB which corresponds to his theological vision. In what follows we note the main correspondences and divergences among the four canonical Gospels in their portrayal of John and Jesus. This survey is worthwhile as a basis for our discussion in the subsequent chapters.

2.2.1 *The Marcan Evidence*

After the introductory caption, Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ] (1.1), the second Evangelist immediately launches into an account of the ministry of John. John is presented as a harbinger fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40.3 (Mk 1.2-3). He is portrayed as a prophet (1.6-8; 6.15b; 11.32), indeed referred to obliquely as *Elijah-redivivus* (6.15a; 9.11-13) ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν (1.4). All those who in penitence confess their sins are baptised by John in the Jordan river. Mark indicates an overwhelming response to John's preaching and baptising ministry (1.5).

John's water baptism foreshadows a superior baptism of the Holy Spirit to be administered by an anticipated greater figure who will come after him, and for whom JB is unfit even to perform the menial task of a servant (1.7-8). Jesus comes from Nazareth in Galilee and presents himself for baptism by John. During the baptism, Jesus is revealed as the Son of God and empowered by the Spirit for his ministry (1.9-11). Mark indicates, in a passage which is couched in the form of a summary report, that Jesus does not begin his Galilean ministry until John is incarcerated (1.14-15).

JB and Jesus are once again juxtaposed in a passage where Jesus is confronted with a question as to why his disciples do not engage in the practice of fasting as do the disciples of JB and the Pharisees (2.18). Jesus responds to this question in rabbinical

style with a counter question. Using a wedding analogy, he explains to his detractors the 'newness/uniqueness' of his ministry in contrast to that of John and the Pharisees (2.19-20). The difference in style between his ministry and that of JB is further fleshed out as Jesus responds with two parables that are thematically and structurally parallel to each other: (i) the old and new garments; and (ii) the old and new wineskins (2.21-22).

The next Marcan passage recounts the imprisonment and summary execution of JB by Herod Antipas. In the first part of the account, the Evangelist records three popular estimates of Jesus: some perceive him to be John raised from the dead, others that he is Elijah-*redivivus*, still others, one of the prophets. Antipas himself seems to be of the opinion that Jesus is John raised to life (6.14-16; cf. 8.27-28). John is apprehended, imprisoned and executed by Antipas for his criticism of Antipas' marriage to his own sister-in-law, Herodias. According to Mark, the tragic execution of John is precipitated by pressure from Herodias. Herod is reluctant to put John to death since he regards him as a righteous and holy man (6.17-29), a perception which, according to Josephus,³⁶ was commonly held by the people.

Another Marcan passage in which John and Jesus are juxtaposed can be found within the context of the transfiguration of Jesus (9.1-8), where Moses and Elijah appear and converse with him. Jesus' reference to John is in response to a question directed to him by his disciples: Ὅτι λέγουσιν οἱ γραμματεῖς ὅτι Ἡλίου δεῖ ἐλθεῖν πρῶτον; (9.11). In 9.12 Jesus refers to the expectation of an Elijah figure, who comes to 'restore all things' (cf. Mal 4.5-6). It is in this context that Jesus then speaks of the Son of Man and his suffering (cf. Isa 52.13-53.12), and in 9.13 confirms that this Elijah-*redivivus* figure has already come: ἀλλὰ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι καὶ Ἡλίας ἐλήλυθεν, καὶ ἐποίησαν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἤθελον, καθὼς γέγραπται ἐπ' αὐτόν (cf. 6.15; 8.28; Q=Matt 11.9-11//Lk 7.26-27; Mal 3.1; Exod 23.20). In this veiled account, Jesus identifies John as Elijah-*redivivus*. Here Jesus as the Son of Man demonstrates how his ministry is related to that of John.³⁷

³⁶ See §4.3.4.

³⁷ In Mark Jesus is confessed as the 'Son of God' (cf. e.g. 1.11; 3.11; 9.7; 15.39), and speaks of himself as the 'Son of Man' (cf. e.g. 8.31; 9.31; 10.33-34).

Jesus and his disciples re-enter the temple in Jerusalem during the final week of his earthly ministry (11.27-30), after a previous visit when he clears it of the money changers and merchandise (11.15-19). His critics (the temple authorities) immediately demand his credentials with a question, Ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς; ἢ τίς σοι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῇς; (11.28). Jesus' response in the form of a counter question, τὸ βάπτισμα τὸ Ἰωάννου ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἦν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων; (11.30) stymies his detractors, since either answer places them in difficulty. So they hold their peace. Consequently, Jesus also refuses to respond to their question (verses 31-33).

2.2.1.1 Summary

(1)* JB is presented as a forerunner who fulfils the Isaianic prophecy (Isa 40.3). (2)* He is portrayed as a prophet, indeed, referred to obliquely as *Elijah-redivivus*, who lives an ascetic life in the wilderness. He proclaims and administers a 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' in the Jordan river. (3)* John predicts a baptism of the Holy Spirit, superior to his water baptism, to be administered by an anticipated figure, mightier and superior than he. (4)* John baptises Jesus in the Jordan. It is during his baptism that Jesus experiences a dramatic divine commissioning. (5)* Jesus commences his Galilean ministry after John has been put in prison. (6)* Jesus' disciples do not fast like the disciples of the Pharisees. Through the analogy of the wedding reception, Jesus suggests that his ministry is the ultimate fulfilment of the preparatory ministry of John. The following two parables, which share a common theme, are meant to underline the difference in style between his ministry and that of John. (7)* The outlook of the public ministries of John and Jesus are so similar that some think Jesus is John raised from the dead, or *Elijah-redivivus*, or one of the prophets. Jesus himself refers indirectly to John as *Elijah incognito*, by virtue of his ministry and suffering. (8)* John is executed by Antipas at the instigation of Herodias. Antipas seems reluctant to put John to death because he is held in high esteem by the

tetrarch as a righteous and holy man. (9)* Jesus identifies closely with John's ministry and acknowledges that John's baptism has been authorised and approved by God.

2.2.2 *The Q Tradition*

The Q tradition contains a collection of sayings and teachings concerned with the relationship between JB and Jesus. Although it contains a baptism narrative in the Mark–Q overlap, we are here listing only the elements distinctive of Q alone.³⁸ The first Q passage (Lk 3.7b-9//Matt 3.7b-10) highlights the teaching of John addressed to those who come to him for baptism. In Luke the message is directed at the crowds (τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις, Lk 3.7a), while Matthew singles out for mention the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Matt 3.7a).³⁹ The message contains a vituperative accusation against the audience and an exhortation to a new lifestyle. The hearers are warned against priding themselves on the merits of Abraham and against relying on their ethnic lineage to save them from the eschatological judgment. The urgency of the situation is underscored by the statement that the axe is already positioned at the base of the fruitless tree ready to cut it down.

The second Q passage (Lk 3.16b-17//Matt 3.11-12) focuses on the coming figure and his role in the eschatological period. In contrast to John's water baptism, the anticipated, mightier figure baptises with 'a Holy Spirit and fire' (Mk 1.8 has no reference to 'fire'). John adds a cutting edge to his message of warning with an agricultural illustration of a farmer and his threshing floor, where the wheat is separated from the chaff.

In the third Q passage Jesus steps aside as a neutral observer and praises JB (Lk 7.18-28, 31-35//Matt 11.2-11, 16-19). In the scheme of Matthew this pericope takes

³⁸ Catchpole, *Quest*, pp. 63, 152-58. Most of the Q passages are cited from Luke as a matter of convenience.

³⁹ It has been suggested that the joining of the two groups in Matthew is redactional and unhistorical (cf. Matt 16.1, 6, 11-12) and that the first Evangelist falls foul to anachronism here, by retrojecting the contemporary form of Pharisaical Judaism which developed after A.D. 70 to the time of Jesus, when Judaism was diverse and less monolithic in outlook. See U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* trans W. C. Linss (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), pp. 169-70; Wink, *John the Baptist*, pp. 33-34, esp. note 2. This view has been disputed by others including Carson, 'Matthew' in *EBC* vol 8 (Matthew, Mark, Luke) ed. F. E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), pp. 32-36; —'Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: A Reappraisal', *JETS* 25 (1982), 161-74.

us back to 4.12, in which Jesus begins his ministry only after JB has been incarcerated. This is despite the reasons for John's imprisonment and death not being narrated till 14.1-12. The parallel account in Luke does not mention John's imprisonment, but begins with the information furnished to him by his disciples concerning the activities of Jesus. The passage can be conveniently divided as follows: (i) John's uncertainty about Jesus' identity (Lk 7.18-23//Matt 11.2-6); and (ii) Jesus' understanding of John in relation to himself (Lk 7.24-28, 31-35; 16.16//Matt 11.7-13, 15, 16-19).

While John languishes in jail, he hears of the marvellous deeds of Jesus through his own disciples (who are evidently able to visit him). He dispatches some of the disciples—two, according to Lk 11.18—with a question for Jesus: Σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν; (Lk 7.19//Matt 11.3). Jesus asks them to report back to their master about the miracles that they themselves have witnessed and heard about him—in Luke Jesus does more miracles in the presence of John's emissaries (Lk 17.21). This part of the passage concludes with an aphorism: καὶ μακάριός ἐστιν ὃς ἐὰν μὴ σκανδαλισθῇ ἐν ἐμοί (Lk 7.23//Matt 11.6). Jesus' reply, cast in the form of a beatitude, appeals to John and his disciples not to fall into the sin of unbelief.

After the messengers have left, Jesus begins to praise John before the crowd: first, as the prophet *par excellence* (Lk 7.24-26//Matt 11.7-9); secondly, as the messenger of the Lord (Lk 7.27//Matt 7.10); thirdly, as the greatest human being who ever lived, although qualified by the paradoxical statement that 'the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he' (Lk 7.28//Matt 11.11).

In Matt 11.12-13//Lk 16.16 Jesus emphasises that the kingdom of God is so much a present reality that it suffers violence, and that this period commenced from the time of John. John is here portrayed as a prototype of all who are maltreated for the sake of the kingdom.

The Q tradition about John and Jesus concludes with a parable about two groups of children playing in the market-place. One group of children is unable to elicit any response from the other group, no matter what they do. The children in the first group, as if at a wedding, play music on their flutes to the second group who refuse to dance.

The second group then invites the first group to wail, as if in a funeral dirge; but the first group will not mourn. In this parable Jesus identifies with JB through a comparison of the different methods employed in their respective ministries, and highlights the reaction of their contemporaries. John lives a frugal and abstemious lifestyle as an ascetic; he is thought to be demon-possessed. The Son of Man, on the other hand, comes 'eating and drinking', and he is accused as 'a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' The parable concludes with the conventional summons to pay attention: 'Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds' (Lk 7.31-35//Matt 11.16-19). Here Jesus not only approves of John's ministry, but also emphasises the blindness of their opponents' negative responses to their ministries.

2.2.2.1 *Summary*

(1)* John calls his audience 'a brood of vipers' and issues a message of warning concerning the imminent judgment. He criticises as presumptuous the idea entertained by his captive audience that they can be saved from the coming judgment simply on account of their past privileged position as children of Abraham. (2)* John contrasts his inferior water baptism with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire by the anticipated, superior figure. (3)* Through the analogy of the farmer and his threshing floor, John explains that the process of separation between the wheat and the chaff is almost complete. The wheat is to be gathered into the barn while the chaff is destroyed by fire. (4)* John appears uncertain about the identity of Jesus. From his prison, he sends some of his disciples to Jesus with a question of clarification. Jesus responds with miracles in the presence of the emissaries. (5)* Jesus himself witnesses to John's unassailable status as: (i) a prophet; (ii) a messenger of the Lord; and (iii) the greatest man who ever lived, yet with a qualification that the 'least in the kingdom of God is greater than he'. (6)* Jesus testifies to John's significance in the divine scheme and alludes to his own sufferings in the eschatological period. (7)* Jesus identifies with John through a comparison of the different styles displayed by their respective ministries within the eschatological era.

2.2.3 *The Matthean Evidence*

Matthew has a lot in common with Luke (Q) in his use of the traditions about John and Jesus, and makes use of other material which has no parallel in Mark. After Matthew's infancy narrative of Jesus (Matt 1-2), a birth narrative which has no parallel in Mark, John appears ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας (Matt 3.1) preaching a message of different emphasis from that of Mark: 'repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (3.2). This same message is re-echoed by Jesus at the beginning of his Galilean ministry (4.17). Matthew is perhaps more explicit about designating John as the forerunner of Jesus by using one of his favourite citations (3.3).⁴⁰ In the description of John's appearance and way of life, and of the positive response to his message and baptism, Matthew follows Mark very closely (Matt 3.4-6//Mk 1.5-6).

Jesus first encounters John at the Jordan as one of the baptismal candidates (Matt 3.13). Matthew alone inserts into the short Marcan account of the baptismal scene a short dialogue in which John questions the propriety of baptising Jesus. Jesus overrules John with the words, Ἄφες ἄρτι, οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην. τότε ἀφήσιν αὐτόν (3.14-15). This is an important question to which we shall return.⁴¹

Matthew again follows Mark very closely in his remark that Jesus begins his Galilean ministry after John has been arrested (4.12; cf. Mk 1.14).

In Matthew the question of fasting is raised by John's disciples, in contrast to Mark where no particular group is mentioned, though it appears Mark has the crowd in mind (Matt 9.14-17; cf. Mk 2.18-22). Furthermore, Matthew explicitly identifies John as *Elijah-redivivus* (11.14-15; 17.10-13).

Matthew abbreviates Mark's story of the execution of John in two important ways (Matt 14. 1-12// Mk 6.14-29). First, in Matthew, it is Herod himself who seeks to put John to death. Herod, however, fears the reaction of the crowd which considers

⁴⁰ Matthew's further use of proof from prophecy, see 2.5, 15, 17, 23; 4.14; 8.17; 13.14, 35; 21.4; 27.9.

⁴¹ See §§8.6.1; 9.2.

John to be a prophet (14.5). Secondly, whereas in Mark the disciples, upon hearing the death of their master, come to remove his corpse for burial, in Matthew they make a report to Jesus after they have laid the body to rest (14.12). As a result of this news, Jesus withdraws into a solitary place away from the crowds, although they soon find out where he is and follow him there (14.13).

Matthew 21.23-28 re-echoes the parallel passage in Mk 11.27-33 where Jesus' teaching authority is questioned by the temple establishment: Ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς; καὶ τίς σοι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην; (Matt 21.23b). As in the Marcan context noted above, Jesus turns the question on its head by referring to John's baptism: τὸ βάπτισμα τὸ Ἰωάννου πόθεν ἦν; ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων; (21.25a). The nuance of Jesus' question suggests how closely he identifies himself with John.

The last Matthean passage is the polemical parable of the two sons who are asked to work in their father's vineyard (Matt 21.28-32). This is the first of three parables by which Jesus rebukes the Jewish leaders for their unbelief (cf. verses 33-46; 22.1-14). Jesus completes the parable with a statement about John in which he contrasts the favourable response of tax collectors and harlots to John's ministry with its rejection by the religious establishment. Jesus endorses John's ministry as 'a way of righteousness' (21.32). Jesus here firmly identifies and aligns himself with the ministry and message of John. If his interlocutors had believed John, they would also have believed him and accepted his ministry.

2.2.3.1 Summary

(1) JB begins his ministry in the wilderness of Judea with the proclamation 'repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'. (2)* John is the forerunner, who fulfils the Isaianic prophecy (Isa 40.3). (3)* He is a prophet. (4)* The effectiveness of John's ministry is underlined by the statement that large crowds from 'Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan' go to him for baptism in the Jordan 'confessing their sins' (Matt 3.5-6). (5) Jesus comes from Galilee to be baptised by John in the

Jordan. In the preceding dialogue, John questions the propriety of baptising Jesus, but is overruled by Jesus, who states that his baptism is necessary 'to fulfil all righteousness' (Matt 3.15a). (6) Jesus commences his public ministry with an identical message to John, but not until John has been incarcerated. (7)* The disciples of John fast while Jesus's disciples do not. (8)* Jesus explicitly identifies John as *Elijah-redivivus*. (9) John's execution is instigated by Herod Antipas himself. The relationship between JB and Jesus is such that after his death John's disciples inform Jesus. (10)* Again, Jesus identifies with John's ministry by submitting to John's baptism in an attempt to show his detractors that his own ministry is of divine origin.

2.2.4 *The Lucan/Acts Evidence*

Following his dedicatory prologue (Lk 1.1-4), Luke presents both John and Jesus to the reader in an almost identical and parallel order in the expansive infancy narratives (Lk 1.5-2.52). Within these narratives, the baby John is portrayed as a prophet fulfilling the role of *Elijah-redivivus* (1.17), though like Mark, the Evangelist does not explicitly identify John as such.⁴²

At the onset of his ministry, John is cast in the role of the forerunner who fulfils the Isaianic prophecy (Lk 3.1-6; cf. Isa 40.3-4). His audience is diverse, including the wealthy, tax collectors and soldiers (Lk 3.10-14). The impact of John's prophetic preaching is such that some even perceive him to be the Christ.

In Luke's brief account of the baptism of Jesus, no mention is made of John's role in the event (Lk 3.21-22). In fact, in the scheme of the Evangelist, the imprisonment of John by Herod is narrated before the baptism of Jesus (Lk 3.19-20).

The Pharisees and the scribes question Jesus about why his disciples do not follow the common practice of fasting and prayer, observed by the disciples of John and by the Pharisees (5.30, 33). As in the parallel accounts in both Mark and Matthew,

⁴² Wink, however, suggests that Luke shows no or less interest in the concept of an eschatological Elijah found in Malachi, Mark and Matthew. Instead there is an Elijah-midrash based on the account of Elijah in 1 and 2 Kings, where Jesus rather than John is compared with Elijah. See Wink, *John the Baptist*, pp. 42-45.

the Lucan Jesus constructs his response on the analogy of the wedding reception and the two thematically and structurally parallel parables which follow (5.34-39).

After Jesus' acclamation of John in Q (Lk 7.18-28//Matt 11.2-11), Luke writes in the same context that the people, including tax collectors, praise God that they have received John's baptism, though the Pharisees and the lawyers refuse to accept it (7.29-30). Furthermore, in Luke 11.1 the disciples of Jesus entreat him to teach them how to pray as John has taught his disciples.

The rest of the Lucan juxtaposition of the Jesus and the Baptist movements is found in his second treatise, the Acts of the Apostles. John's water baptism is contrasted with the baptism with the Holy Spirit promised to the early Church (Acts 1.5). Luke further indicates that the criteria for electing a new apostle in place of Judas include one who has been with the original group since John's baptism (1.21-22).

After his visionary experience and the subsequent didactic session with Cornelius, the Gentile centurion at Caesarea, Peter explains that the Gospel began with John's baptism. He also refers to Jesus' statement regarding John's baptism and the baptism with the Holy Spirit (10.37; 11.16).

In his sermon at Antioch of Pisidia, Paul refers to John's preparatory proclamation of a conversionary baptism and the anticipated superior figure (13.24-25). Apollos, a native Jew of Alexandria and well versed in the scriptures and the traditions concerning Jesus, knows only the baptism of John (18.24-25). It is significant that an instructed faith in Jesus Christ, as exemplified by Apollos, should have been grafted onto John's pre-Christian baptism.⁴³ It appears from this pericope that John's message had traversed the borders of Palestine into the lands beyond.

Finally, Paul finds a group of disciples in Ephesus who have only experienced John's baptism. These disciples confess their ignorance about the Holy Spirit. On hearing this, Paul instructs them again about John's baptism of repentance and his message of the expected figure, a promise which had found its fulfilment in Jesus.

⁴³ Backhaus suggests that Apollos was a special missionary of the Christian kerygma, who was converted from the Baptist movement. He, however, must integrate into the socio-ecclesial unit of Paul's missionary community. —*Jüngerkreis*, p. 369.

Paul then rebaptises them 'in the name of the Lord Jesus', after which they receive the 'Holy Spirit' (Acts 19.1-7).

2.2.4.1 *Summary*

(1) In the expansive infancy narratives, Luke presents John and Jesus in parallel as the two key figures in the eschatological drama. John is here implicitly presented as *Elijah-redivivus*. (2)* John preaches baptism in the region around the Jordan. (3)* John is cast in the role of a forerunner, who fulfils the Isaianic prophecy (Isa 40.3-4). (4)* John's prophetic status is underlined by his prophetic preaching to his audience of diverse origin, including the wealthy, tax collectors, sinners and soldiers. Some even perceive him to be the Christ. (5)* Luke's account of the baptism of Jesus is telescoped, with no direct reference to John's role in the event. John is imprisoned by Antipas for berating Antipas' marriage to Herodias. (6)* In his response to the question of why his disciples do not fast and pray as the disciples of John and the Pharisees, Jesus uses the analogy of a wedding reception to suggest that his ministry is the ultimate fulfilment of the preparatory ministry of John. With the use of two thematically related parables, Jesus points out the difference in style between his ministry and that of John. (7) While some of the people, including tax collectors praise God that they have received John's baptism, the Pharisees and lawyers reject it. (8) Jesus' disciples entreat him to teach them how to pray, as John's disciples have done. (9)* In Acts, John's water baptism is contrasted with the baptism with the Holy Spirit promised to the early Church. (10) The qualification required of a candidate to fill the position created by the death of Judas is membership of the original group from the time of John's baptism. (11) Peter explains that the Gospel begins, in an important sense, with both John's baptism and the promise of the Holy Spirit baptism made to the early Church. (12) In his sermon at Antioch, Paul refers to John's baptism of repentance and the imminence of the anticipated superior figure. (13) Apollos, a native Jew of Alexandria conversant with the scriptures, knows only of John's baptism. (14) There is a group of disciples in Ephesus, which knows only of John's baptism.

2.2.5 The Johannine Evidence

JB⁴⁴ first appears in the prologue of John's Gospel (1.1-18). Here he testifies concerning the light (1.6-9) and witnesses, as in the synoptics, to the superiority of the coming figure.

In response to the question, Σὺ τίς εἶ, asked by the deputation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem, John disclaims all the roles suggested by his interlocutors: he is neither the Christ, nor Elijah-*redivivus*, nor the prophet. Rather he fulfils the role of the forerunner prophesied by Isaiah (1.23; cf. Isa 40.3). His water baptism foreshadows the imminent arrival of a superior figure. This encounter takes place in Bethany beyond the Jordan where John is baptising (1.28). In witnessing to Jesus, John explicitly identifies him as the expected figure (1.30).

The baptism of Jesus by John is only obliquely recounted in retrospect in the fourth Gospel, though the description of the descent of the Spirit is not very different from the synoptic account (1.32-33).

John's testimony about Jesus leads to two of his own disciples leaving him to follow Jesus. One of them, Andrew, finds his brother, Simon Peter, who also becomes a follower of Jesus (1.35-42).

The fourth Evangelist refers to the simultaneous baptising ministries of Jesus and his disciples (in Judea) and John (at Aenon near Salim). The Evangelist explains that this occurs prior to the imprisonment of John (3.22-24; cf. 4.1-2).

In the course of legitimising his divinely authorised ministry, Jesus refers to the ministry of JB (5.31-47). John's testimony is adduced here as an *argumentum ad hominem*.⁴⁵ While Jesus does not rely on such human witness, he nevertheless acknowledges John's testimony. By comparison, Jesus' testimony is greater than that of JB, since he testifies to and accomplishes the work of the Father, even though 'the Jews' do not believe him (5.36-38). The indictment is directed against the Jews who

⁴⁴ I use the appellation 'the Baptist' for John in the fourth Gospel purely for convenience, though it must be noted that the Evangelist never uses this epithet for John.

⁴⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1953), p. 329; Wink, *John the Baptist*, p. 96.

believe in Moses, but not in what he wrote concerning Jesus. While this dialogue with 'the Jews' is meant to underline the Christology of the fourth Gospel, it employs the witness of JB as a means to this end. John impresses 'the Jews' with his testimony, despite the fact that they fail to take advantage of it.

Finally, the Evangelist indicates that at some point in the ministry of Jesus when his life seems to be in danger from 'the Jews', Jesus retires to the place where 'John at first baptised' (10.40).

2.2.5.1 *Summary*

(1) In the fourth Gospel, JB is portrayed first and foremost as a witness to an anticipated superior figure. (2)* Like the synoptists, John is the forerunner who fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah 40.3. (3)* Again the fourth Evangelist shares with the synoptists John's proclamation of the coming figure who baptises with the Holy Spirit, although the fourth Evangelist alone explicitly identifies this figure as Jesus. (4)* The baptism of Jesus by John is obliquely referred to by the Evangelist. (5) The fourth Evangelist, however, makes no allusion to John's physical appearance, to his death at the hands of Herod, to his eschatological preaching of repentance and imminent judgment, or to his ethical exhortations found in Q and the synoptic Gospels. (6) The relationship between JB and Jesus is such that John points two of his own disciples to Jesus. (7) At some point in their ministries, John and Jesus engage in a concurrent baptising activity in different locations. (8) Jesus refers to John's testimony in seeking to legitimise his own actions and witness as ordained and approved by God. (9) Jesus identifies and affirms his solidarity with John by taking refuge at the place where John has carried out his baptising ministry.

2.3 The Reliability of the Gospel Traditions

One of the greatest problems facing the modern critic in the discussion of the relationship between JB and Jesus, concerns the nature of the ancient documents which refer to them. In the first place, the sources of the Gospels present one of the most

difficult and intractable research problems for the exegete. As noted above, the problem of the literary relationships between Matthew, Mark and Luke has exercised scholars over the centuries.⁴⁶ When the three Gospels are juxtaposed, an almost infinitely complex range of literary similarities and differences emerge, which, as noted in the introduction, are difficult to fit into any scheme of relationships. Other major issues concern the relation between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics, the authorial intention and activity of the Gospel writers, and the formidable challenge of form criticism regarding the Gospel material as a reliable source for an investigation into the relationship between JB and Jesus.

A study of the question of the relationship between John and Jesus is one in which the presuppositions and assumptions of different scholars tend to be crucial. Not least is the issue of methodological assumptions and presuppositions in relation to some of the major questions on the reliability of the Gospel traditions for historical study. For the rest of this chapter we shall take a brief look at some aspects of the question of the reliability of the Gospel traditions as they relate to this study: (i) the challenge of form-critical insights; (ii) the theological interests and redactional activity of the Evangelists; (iii) the relation between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics; and (iv) the 'Jesus Seminar' vis-à-vis the 'Third Quest'.

2.3.1 The Challenge of Form-Critical Insights

At its inception in the inter-war period, form criticism, associated principally with K. L. Schmidt, M. Dibelius and R. Bultmann, made an enormous impact on biblical criticism.⁴⁷ According to the earliest form critics, the teachings of Jesus and the narratives about his life extant in the synoptic Gospels were transmitted orally over a considerable period of time before they were written down. It was further presupposed that most of these disparate units of material circulated independently of each other before they were all brought together in their present form.

⁴⁶ §2.1.

⁴⁷ M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* trans B. L. Woolf (London: Ivor Nicholson, 1934); R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* rev. edn. trans J. Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963). See also R. H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction* (Nottingham: IVP, 1988), pp. 161-228.

Dibelius and Bultmann therefore attempted to isolate and classify the various forms (e.g. paradigms or apophthegms, prophetic or apocalyptic sayings, law and community regulations, and stories – historical events, legends, miracles, parables, Christological sayings) and to establish the *Sitz im Leben* (setting in life), including the needs and activities of the early Church (e.g. preaching, worship, parenesis, catechesis, polemic and apologetic).⁴⁸ Their overall conclusion was that the final form of the Gospels does not provide a consistently reliable account of what Jesus actually said and did.

It was suggested that in order to recover the original, pure and unadulterated forms, the critic has to take into account the various accretions and embellishments that have arisen in the course of the transmission of the tradition. This transmission has been compared to later collections of folk literature, in which new anecdotes and legends keep being added, as well as material being altered and deleted. For the earliest form critics the Gospels are fundamentally not *Hochliteratur* (real literature) but *Kleinliteratur* (popular or unsophisticated literature). The Gospels are folk books made up of pericopes, using material from the history of the earliest Christian communities, and are not literary creations of the authors.⁴⁹ Thus form criticism seeks to recover the pre-Gospel use of each passage in the life of the early Church, and to understand the setting of the passage (if there is one) in the ministry of Jesus.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ For a summary of these classifications, see E. V. McKnight, *What is Form Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), pp. 20-33.

⁴⁹ E. Güttgemanns, *Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism: A Methodological Sketch of the Fundamental Problems of Form and Redaction Criticism* trans W. D. Doty (Pittsburgh: Theological Monographs 26 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1979), pp. 125-39.

⁵⁰ Form critics apply a variety of tools to assess the authenticity of the discrete units of Gospel tradition. In an effort to identify those traditions which reflect Jesus' *ipsissima verba* (very own words) or *ipsissima vox* (very own voice) a number of criteria have been developed including: (i) the criterion of dissimilarity or discontinuity, which deems as authentic any teaching or deed of Jesus which is different from contemporary Judaism or the early Church; (ii) the criterion of multiple attestation, which accepts the authenticity of those details which are found in more than one of the Gospel sources; (iii) the criterion of Palestinian environment argues in favour of those units of tradition which are Semitic in style or involve the presence of Aramaisms; thus, since Jesus' background is Palestinian, and since his mother tongue appears to be Aramaic, in particular a Galilean dialect of Aramaic, the presence of Palestinian environmental phenomena and Aramaic linguistic characteristics in the Gospel materials may indicate the primitiveness and hence the authenticity of those traditions; and (iv) the criterion of coherence or consistency, which places a high premium on those discrete units of material which cohere with details already authenticated by one of the other three. For further discussion, see Sanders & M. Davies, *Studying*, pp. 123-97; W. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); S. C. Goetz and C. L. Blomberg, 'The Burden of Proof', *JSNT* 11 (1981), 39-63; R.

Many of the observations of form criticism in respect of the character of the synoptic tradition are valuable, particularly the observation of an oral stage in the production and transmission of many of the Gospel pericopae. Moreover, by proffering a critical method for recovering and examining the traditions behind the Gospels in their pre-literary or oral stage, form criticism offered its practitioners an apparently scientific method of studying both the historical Jesus and the early Christian communities.⁵¹ However, as its principles came under close scrutiny, an increasing number of scholars urged caution about its application. For example, V. Taylor (though friendly to form criticism) argued that form critics pushed too far the distinction between the earliest stage of the Gospel material and the present final form. As noted above, form critics tend to assume that each pericope originally existed in a 'pure' form as a separate unit of material in the pre-literary stage before being brought together with others in their present literary form. Taylor responded that there is nothing like a 'pure' form which corresponds to the earliest stage of the Gospel material. Rather each pericope was shaped in a way which conformed to well-known and popular forms of story-telling in primary societies.⁵²

Form criticism cannot satisfactorily classify and establish the Gospel pericopae according to their various forms or categories. While there are some distinctive types, for example, miracle stories and parables, there are many pericopae in the Gospels which are difficult to classify on grounds of form alone. For example, the temptation story in Matt 4.1-11 could be described as a controversy dialogue (or something else?) similar to Mk 10.2-9; 11.27-33; 12.18-27. Again, some of the legends (e.g. in the stories of Peter's confession, the entry into Jerusalem and the transfiguration) in spite of certain typical features hardly fit neatly into a common form or shape.⁵³

H. Stein, 'The "Criteria" for Authenticity', in R. T. France and D. Wenham eds., *Gospel Perspectives 1: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), pp. 225-63; Sanders, *Tendencies* (1969). For further bibliographic data, see W. R. Telford, 'Introduction: The Interpretation of Mark', in W. R. Telford ed., *The Interpretation of Mark* 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), pp. 1-61.

⁵¹ C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1963), pp. 5-9.

⁵² V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 7-43; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 215-23.

⁵³ This difficulty has been noted by earlier practitioners of form criticism, e.g. Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, p. 4. See further discussion by S. H. Travis, 'Form Criticism', in I. H. Marshall ed., *New*

There is also no evidence to support the notion that the transmission of the synoptic material changed in regular ways, or was governed by precise laws. It is a false impression given by form critics that there were well-proven laws determining the development of oral tradition which can now be scientifically applied to the Gospel material.⁵⁴

The supposition by form critics that the synoptic material is to be compared to folk literature has also been challenged. The Gospels do indeed exhibit noticeable differences, but there is considerable doubt that the material was transmitted orally long enough to develop in the way supposed by form critics.⁵⁵ While the marks of oral transmission are evident in the Gospel tradition, modern folklorists have noted the distinction between oral tradition and written texts in terms of their functions. Folklore is continuously variable in form, serving to keep in motion the social communication of a community. It receives modification in order to serve its social function, or it disappears. Literary texts, by contrast, are less affected by this process of modification and censorship by virtue of their written character.⁵⁶ By regarding the written Gospels not as literary creations of authors but as surrogates for the oral tradition of a community, form criticism has paid less attention to the theological and literary intention of the Gospel authors.⁵⁷ This may explain the lack of interest by form critics in the past regarding the question of literary genre of the Gospel material.⁵⁸

Moreover, it is difficult to know how each form corresponds to a typical situation of the Church (e.g. that the controversy dialogues grew out of the need to have Jesus defend certain Church practices, or that the *Sitz im Leben* of the didactic dialogues was the need to instruct the Christian communities). This preoccupation with the role of the community in shaping the Jesus tradition further explains *Formgeschichte's* lack of

Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods rev. edn. (Exeter: Paternoster, 1979), pp. 153-64.

⁵⁴ Sanders & Davies, *Studying*, pp. 131-32; W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* 2nd edn. trans J. Boyce *et al* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), pp. 15-29.

⁵⁵ G. N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (Cambridge: CUP, 1974), p. 138; cf. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Güttgemanns, *Candid Questions*, esp. pp. 204-11.

⁵⁷ Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Kloppenborg, *Formation*, pp. 1-40.

serious appreciation of the literary and theological contribution of the Evangelists themselves. Thus form criticism's concern with the pre-Gospel stage of individual pericopae prevents it from appreciating the editorial framework of each Gospel and the overall purpose and theological interests of its author(s).

Besides the authorial intention of the Evangelists, K. E. Bailey has persuasively argued for a Middle Eastern model as an alternative method for appreciating the transmission of the oral tradition behind the synoptic Gospels. Bailey's theory is based on the reality of personal experiences of more than three decades of life and study in the Middle Eastern traditional cultural world which still preserves in oral tradition much of what is important to its community. He proposes 'a classical methodology for the preservation, control and transmission of tradition that provides, on the one hand, assurance of authenticity and, on the other hand, freedom within limits of various forms of that tradition'. This model he calls the 'informal controlled oral tradition'.⁵⁹ By informal Bailey means that there is no set teacher and no specifically identified student. In theory, anyone can participate in this informal evening gathering, where stories, poems and other traditional materials are told and recited. Normally it is the older and venerable men who tend to do the reciting. At the same time, only those who have grown up within the community and know the stories can recite them in public gatherings. Thus there are clear parameters.

With supporting evidence from the Middle East, Bailey proposes that 'the Synoptic Gospels include primarily the same forms that have been found preserved by informal controlled oral tradition such as proverbs, parables, poems, dialogues, conflict stories and historical narratives'.⁶⁰ To the early Christians, remembering the words and deeds of Jesus was to affirm not only their faith, but their unique identity. Bailey therefore concludes that 'the stories had to be told and controlled or everything that made them who they were was lost'.⁶¹ Bailey's theory contributes significantly to our

⁵⁹ K. E. Bailey, 'Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels', *Themelios* 20.2 (1995), 4-11.

⁶⁰ Bailey, 'Informal Controlled Oral Tradition', 10.

⁶¹ Bailey, 'Informal Controlled Oral Tradition', 10.

understanding of how the Jesus tradition was consolidated, preserved, controlled, transmitted and finally recorded by the Evangelists.

The above problems have forced some scholars not only to modify some of the underlying assumptions of form criticism, but to look for alternative models for Gospel analysis. In the 1950s redaction criticism (*Redaktionsgeschichte*) emerged. Redaction criticism has successfully demonstrated that the Gospel writers were more than collectors and vehicles of tradition, or 'scissors-and-paste' men, who did not exercise any appreciable control over the tradition they compiled.⁶² In recent years, further methodological developments have emerged in the study of Gospel literary relationships. The growing awareness of biblical scholars of the literary achievements of the Evangelists has given rise to newer disciplines of literary criticism in analyses of the Gospels.⁶³

2.3.2 *The Redactional Activity of the Evangelists*

It has also been argued, more specifically, that as a source of historical information about JB and Jesus, the canonical Gospels are limited, because each Evangelist's interest is coloured by Christological considerations. For example, there is a strong scholarly opinion that the early Church diminished or suppressed any suggestion of JB's superiority or equality in status to Jesus. This Christological pre-

⁶² Redaction-critical analysis, which developed as a corrective or a supplement for form and tradition criticism, seeks to examine the alterations which the Evangelists have made to their sources. Redaction critics work with the assumption of a source, for example, Mark, if one assumes Marcan priority, as we have done in this study. For further study, see C. C. Black, *The Disciples According to Mark: Marcan Redaction in Current Debate* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989); Stein, *Synoptic Problem*, pp. 231-72; —'What is Redaktionsgeschichte?' *JBL* 88 (1969), 45-56; D. A. Carson, 'Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool', in D. A. Carson and J. Woodbridge eds., *Scripture and Truth* (Leicester: IVP, 1983), pp. 119-42; S. Smalley, 'Redaction Criticism', in *New Testament Interpretation*, pp. 181-95; N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969); Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*; G. Bornkamm, 'The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew', in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* trans P. Scott (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 52-57.

⁶³ Literary critics basically assume the literary unity of the Gospel narratives, and that reading or listening to the Gospel involves literary appreciation. The Gospels contain theological as well as historical material. Therefore, literary criticism and appreciation are necessary for theological and historical understanding of the Gospel materials. For a summary of some of these new approaches, see Telford, 'Introduction', in *Interpretation of Mark*, pp. 1-61. See also B.L. Mack and V. K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1989); S. D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); N. R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); A. N. Wilder, *The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric* (NY: Harper & Row, 1964).

occupation therefore led to a process of selection and adaptation of the available traditions in order to project Jesus' superiority to John, and even to present John as a Christian Baptist. This, of course, meant that a lot of historical information which did not contribute to their interests and purposes was left out of consideration.

An example of the Christological concern of the Evangelists is shown by what appears to be a subtle attempt to minimise the historical relationship between JB and Jesus. John's independent prophetic status, which is attested by Josephus,⁶⁴ is gradually reduced into a conscious forerunner, whose main role is to herald the advent of his superior successor. For example, according to Mark, JB appears without any explanation as a prophet, 'preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Mk 1.4). Without any embellishments, Jesus presents himself in a matter-of-fact fashion as one of the baptismal candidates, and is baptised by John in the Jordan. There is no explicit reference in Mark's account (Mk 1.4-11) that Jesus is recognised by John as the superior figure who is to baptise with the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew, however, this picture begins to be developed as it receives some special touches. John now recognises Jesus as the superior figure, and protests at the idea of baptising his superior (Matt 3.14-15). The picture becomes even more intensified in Luke's Gospel, where again Jesus is recognised by John as the superior figure. Luke indicates in his infancy narratives that when Mary and Elizabeth met, the baby in Elizabeth's womb 'leaped for joy' (Lk 1.39-45).

In the fourth Gospel, the climax of this heightened process is reached. JB is almost stripped of his independent prophetic status. Here, he is portrayed as a witness *par excellence* to Jesus, who appears in the prologue as the pre-existent figure (John 1.7-8, 15, 29, 36). The supernatural event at the implied baptismal scene occurred for the benefit of JB (and presumably for the crowd as well), namely, to reveal the identity of Jesus, whose advent as the superior figure John has been commissioned to proclaim (John 1.31-33). More generally, in comparison with the synoptic Gospels, the

⁶⁴ See §4.3.4.

Christological distinctiveness of the fourth Gospel cannot be denied. It is only in the fourth Gospel that Jesus is explicitly designated 'God' (John 1.1, 18; 10.30; 20.28).

The redacting process of selection and adaptation of the existing traditions by the respective Evangelists leads, arguably, not just to divergences in emphasis, but to quite deliberately distinct theological interpretations. As noted above, the Evangelists creatively adapted the Jesus tradition to the new situation of the Church brought about by the resurrected Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Redaction criticism offers us valuable insights into the distinctive features and ideas of the Gospel writers in their handling of the Jesus tradition. The Gospel writers were not disinterested reporters of the events they describe. It is true that they saw themselves as faithful presenters and arrangers of the stories and sayings of Jesus. At least this seems to be the intention of Luke in his dedicatory preface (Lk 1.1-4).⁶⁵ But the Evangelists saw their task not only as one of passing on and preserving the traditions about Jesus, but also of interpreting the traditions for their respective communities. It is therefore not surprising to find developmental and compositional layers in the Gospel accounts.

How are we to assess redaction criticism? While the redactional process of the Evangelists is looked at in some detail in the subsequent chapters, suffice it to say here that there is reason to take seriously the historical value of much of the material they preserve. For example, it is now almost universally accepted by scholars that two of the most incontrovertible pieces of evidence for Jesus research are that: (i) Jesus was baptised by John in the river Jordan; and (ii) Jesus spoke highly of John.⁶⁶ It is very unlikely that these would have been invented by the early Church, knowing that they would be a source of profound embarrassment. For the sake of the early Church's ideas on the uniqueness, sinlessness and pre-existence of Jesus, it would have been more convenient to have omitted the above facts which suggest possible contact between Jesus and JB. The fact that they are indeed in the Gospel traditions suggest, therefore, that they were firmly embedded in the earliest accounts of Christian origins.

⁶⁵ L. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1* SNTSMS 78 (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), esp. pp. 1-22, 67-146.

⁶⁶ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 11; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, pp. 232-34.

2.3.3 The Relation Between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics

Much ink has flowed over the complex question of the relation between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics, and it would be presumptuous to attempt a rigorous analysis of the problem in a study which is not primarily concerned with this topic. In what follows, we briefly review and state our views on this question in relation to this study.

The fourth Gospel incorporates a number of biographical incidents and material which have no counterpart in the synoptics. For example, according to the synoptists, it was the cleansing of the temple which provoked the hostility of the Jewish authorities against Jesus (Mk 11.15-18 and par). In the fourth Gospel, the cleansing of the temple is described early in the ministry of Jesus (John 2.13-22). However, it is the raising of Lazarus, an incident not reported by any of the synoptists, which triggered off the machinations of the Jewish authorities against Jesus (John 11.38-54).

John's Gospel further differs from the synoptics in the dating of the crucifixion. According to the synoptists, the last supper was a Passover meal eaten in the early hours of Nisan 15, the day when Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion also took place (Mk 14.1-15.41 and par). John's Gospel, on the other hand, places the crucifixion on Nisan 14, the day preceding the Passover (John 13.1; 18.28; 19.14, 31, 42). This implies that the last supper must have been eaten the preceding evening and could not have been the Passover meal. Jesus' death therefore occurred during the Passover sacrifices.

Moreover, in matters of chronological detail, the fourth Gospel differs from the synoptics. For example, references to Jewish festivals in the fourth Gospel seem to suggest that Jesus conducted at least a three-year ministry between Judea and Galilee (John 2.23; 6.4; 11.55), while the synoptics seem to indicate only one visit to Jerusalem before his apprehension and crucifixion (Mk 14.1; Matt 26.2; Lk 22.1).

The differences between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics include their treatment of JB. For example, the synoptists bring both JB and Jesus into contact with each other in their adult life only at the time of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan (Mk 1.9-11;

Matt 3.13-17; Lk 3.21-22). It has been noted that in Luke's account, John is in prison when Jesus comes to be baptised in the Jordan (Lk 3.20). According to the first and the second Evangelists, Jesus bursts on the scene to commence his ministry only after John has been incarcerated by Herod (Mk 1.14-15; Matt 4.12-17; cf. Lk 4.14-15). Again, even in prison John is still not aware of the identity of Jesus (Matt 11.1-2; Lk 7.18). The fourth Evangelist, on the other hand, brings John and Jesus into contact on more than one occasion (John 1.33, 35-36). The Evangelist further attests to a period of contact after John has baptised Jesus, when their ministries run concurrently, at least for a period prior to John's incarceration (John 3.22-24).

As a result of these and many other differences between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics, many scholars are skeptical indeed about John's Gospel. In fact, earlier apologetic underlined the 'historical' nature of the synoptic account of Jesus' life and ministry, in contrast to the 'theological' emphasis and interpretation of John's Gospel. This has often been the trend since Clement observed that John composed a spiritual Gospel after the physical facts of Jesus' ministry had been recorded in the synoptics.⁶⁷

Part of the complexity of the debate on the relationship between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics concerns the question of literary dependence and sources. It is often suggested that the fourth Evangelist knew the synoptics and depended upon them.⁶⁸ Others have argued that the fourth Gospel preserves traditions independent of the synoptics.⁶⁹ A mediating view has been advocated by some scholars in recent years: it is argued that the evidence does not compel us to believe that John used Mark as a source, though it is possible that he may have known Mark and possibly the other synoptists as he wrote his Gospel. Nevertheless, while the fourth Evangelist did not depend on any of the synoptics as his source, neither did he compose his Gospel totally in isolation from them. In fact the fourth Evangelist presupposed traditions that were

⁶⁷ Euseb. *H.E.* vi.14.7.

⁶⁸ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* 2nd edn. (London: SPCK, 1978), pp. 42-54.

⁶⁹ Lindars, *The Gospel of John* NCB (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), pp. 25-28; R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* vol 1 (i-xii) AB 29 (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), pp. xlv-xlvii; R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* trans G. R. Beasley-Murray eds. R. W. Hoare and J. K. Riches (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), pp. 3-7; P. Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: CUP, 1938), pp. 3-10.

not included in his treatise (John 20.30; cf. 21.25). Thus we are not to ignore the synoptists in the interpretation of John's Gospel.⁷⁰ This view may appear to be a wise solution in the present stage of the debate, in spite of some inherent problems.⁷¹

As a corollary, it can be argued that the distinction between the synoptics and John as being historical and theological respectively, is an artificial one. As shown above, the synoptic Evangelists, like John, are also theologians, and each Evangelist presents the story of Jesus from the vantage point of the theological needs and interests of his community. Moreover, both the synoptic and Johannine theologies have their centre in the ministry (words and deeds) of the historical Jesus.

Despite the divergences noted above, there are also significant similarities and closely connected parallels between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics. Some of these include: the descent of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism by John (Mk 1.10 and par; John 1.32); the contrast between John's water baptism and the coming figure's Spirit baptism (Mk 1.7-8 and par//John 1.23); the call of the disciples (Mk 3.13-19 and par//John 1.35-51); the cleansing of the temple (Mk 11.15-19 and par//John 2.13-22); the feeding of the five thousand (Mk 6.32-44 and par//John 6.1-15); and the walking on the water (Mk 6.45-52 and par//John 6.16-21). There are a number of common sayings between John and the synoptics (e.g. Mk 4.12 and par//John 12.39-40; Mk 6.4 and par//John 4.44; Mk 9.37//Matt 10.40//John 12.44-45; Matt 9.37-38//John 4.35; Matt 11.25-27//John 10.14-15; Matt 18.12-14//Lk 15.3-7//John 10.1-15; Matt 25.46//John 5.29).

Furthermore, there are other features between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics which reinforce and explain each other, without necessarily suggesting literary dependence. One which is particularly relevant for this study is the fourth Evangelist's extensive account of Jesus' Judean ministry, which may explain several features of the

⁷⁰ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* WBC 36 (Milton Keynes: Word (UK) Ltd, 1991), pp. xxxv-xxxvii; J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* BNTC (London: A. & C. Black, 1968), esp. p. 10; D. M. Smith Jr., 'The Sources of the Gospel of John: An Assessment of the Present State of the Problem', *NTS* 10 (1964), 336-51.

⁷¹ If John knew the synoptics (or at least some of them), this raises the complex questions of the relative chronologies of the ministry of Jesus, as well as dates of composition and authorship of both John and the synoptics.

synoptic account of Jesus' Galilean ministry and his brief visit to Jerusalem shortly before his death. In Mk 14.49, Jesus is reported to have taught in the temple courts καθ' ἡμέραν, a fact which could certainly have infuriated the temple authorities. Jesus' trepidation of his final trip to Jerusalem (Mk 10.32 and par) may be explained by the fact that he had been to Jerusalem on earlier occasions and felt the incipient hatred of the authorities. Here the fourth Gospel offers a concrete explanation of the events (John 11.1f). Other details, such as the ease with which Jesus was able to secure an ass and a furnished upper room for the meal with his disciples (Mk 11.1-11; 14.12-16 and par), are understandable if we presuppose earlier trips to Judea. In the synoptics, Jesus knows the family of Mary and Martha (Lk 10.38-42), but it is the fourth Gospel that provides more details of Jesus' connection with this family (John 11).⁷²

Similarly, though it has not been explored in any appreciable depth, the synoptics also provide details that may help explain some events in the fourth Gospel. The narrative framework of John 18-19 moves so quickly between the Jewish and Roman courts that it is not easy to know what decisions are arrived at in the Jewish judicial setting. The synoptists give a much more coherent picture (Mk 14.53-15.20 and par). Perhaps Philip's hesitation to bring the Greeks to Jesus (John 12.20-23) may be explained in the light of Jesus' prohibition of any ministry to the Gentiles (Matt 10.5).

The above discussion, though brief, suggests that at the historical level, the relationship between John's Gospel and the synoptists is far too complex to be explained simply by postulating either John's literary dependence or independence of the synoptics. This means that one has to be careful when continually referring to the synoptists to explain the fourth Gospel, or vice versa. The conclusion that emerges is that the complex relationship between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics does not necessarily call into question the authenticity of the traditions in John's Gospel: it may rather enhance it. Lindars is right when he states the case as follows: 'If John did not

⁷² For further discussion of more impressive similarities between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics, see Dodd, *Tradition*, pp. 335-65; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, IVP, 1991), pp. 49-58; C. L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Leicester: IVP, 1987), pp. 156-59; J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* ed. J. F. Coakely (London: SCM, 1985), pp. 11-13, esp. note 32; L. Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (London: Paternoster, 1969), pp. 40-63.

use the Synoptic Gospels, the way is opened for an independent assessment of the historical value of his material. It cannot be taken for granted that he is more reliable than the Synoptists, or less so. Each item has to be taken on its own merits'.⁷³

2.3.4 *The Jesus Seminar vis-à-vis the Third Quest*

The preceding discussion brings into sharp relief the widely differing views of scholars on the question of the reliability of the Gospel material and of their portrayal of the relationship between JB and Jesus. Two main tendencies have emerged in recent scholarly treatment of Jesus and the Gospels. The first stream is represented by the so-called Jesus Seminar, which seems to have revived the scepticism of the historical worth of the Gospel material associated with the form critic Rudolf Bultmann.⁷⁴ Besides elevating the traditions of the extra-canonical *Gospel of Thomas* to the same historical level as the traditions in the synoptic Gospels, the Jesus Seminar also argues for a diminished historical value of the traditions of the fourth Gospel. It is ironic that the Jesus Seminar opts for these two underlying assumptions in its quest for the historical Jesus. As far as the fourth Gospel is concerned, we have observed that there is no need to be unduly sceptical about the reliability of its underlying traditions.⁷⁵

The *Gospel of Thomas*, comprising of 114 sayings, is dated variously between A.D. 50-70 and the end of the second century A.D. However, since parallels to its more distinctive Gnostic concepts and terminology (e.g. 18, 29, 50, 83-84) date from the second century A.D., it is probably not earlier than the end of the first century. It appears that the *Gospel of Thomas* depends on a tradition which is independent of the canonical Gospels, though probably not without the influence of the canonical Gospels.⁷⁶

The second and more interesting and promising development, which offers a useful framework for this study, is the so-called Third Quest – a phenomenon meant to

⁷³ Lindars, *John*, p. 27.

⁷⁴ R. W. Funk, R. W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (NY: Polebridge Press, 1993), pp. 9-11.

⁷⁵ For further discussion of the question of the historical value of the fourth Gospel, see §9.4.

⁷⁶ On the question of the extra-canonical Gospels, see §2.1 above.

be a corrective to the erstwhile Old and New Quests for the historical Jesus.⁷⁷ The Third Quest sees the importance and relevance of looking at broader questions of Jesus' relationship to his Jewish environment (i.e., second temple Judaism) and early Christianity, rather than focusing attention on single or disparate Gospel pericopae.

The Third Quest finds the Gospels' portrait of Jesus to be in many ways a historically credible one, it thus being possible to engage in a reasonably detailed reconstruction of the ministry of Jesus from a historical point of view. We may grant, of course, that such reconstruction is likely to be very complex. Yet it is relevant to point out that the central features of Jesus' teaching (e.g. the imminent kingdom of God and the reference to himself as Son of Man) make sense in the first-century Jewish context. The Jews were looking forward to God's intervention and the establishment of his kingdom as portrayed in Daniel 7. Moreover, the form and language of Jesus' teaching fit a first-century Palestinian context. Most scholars now believe that Jesus' sayings in the Gospels, though recorded in Greek, are stylistically Hebraic/Aramaic. It is probable that earliest Palestinian Christianity continued in many important respects the sort of ministry in which Jesus himself had engaged.⁷⁸ The Third Questers therefore urge a form of critical realism in the study of the Gospel evidence, in which the worldviews, aims and motivations of Jesus and the early Christian communities, expressed in the Gospels, are taken into consideration. In sum, they posit that Jesus must be understood within the context of the social, cultural and political dynamics of first century Judaism and the Hellenistic world of his time.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ S. Neill and N. T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986* 2nd edn. (Oxford: OUP, 1988), pp. 379-403; J. H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 1.

⁷⁸ D. Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus: Pictures of Revolution* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), pp. 213-17; G. Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus* trans J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1978), pp. 4, 121.

⁷⁹ Neill and Wright, *Interpretation*, pp. 379-403; M. J. Borg, 'A Renaissance in Jesus Studies', *ThToday* 45 (1988), 280-92. Some of the current bibliographical resources with good surveys of the Jesus research include: W. R. Telford, 'Major Trends and Interpretative Issues in the Study of Jesus', in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, pp. 33-74; C. Brown, 'Historical Jesus, Quest of', *DJG*, pp. 326-41; C. A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography* NTTS 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1989); W. M. Thompson, *The Jesus Debate: A Survey and Synthesis* (NY: Paulist Press, 1985); Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 2; W. B. Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus: A Guidebook* (London: SCM, 1982).

As for this study, it will presuppose an openness to the Gospel material, but not a credulous or unsophisticated acceptance of every narrative in the Gospels as historically beyond question. As indicated above, the Gospel writers used traditions about the historical Jesus which they interpreted in the light of both their own theological understanding, and the theological needs of their respective Christian communities. Each piece of information must therefore be weighed historically, as it is closely studied within its context and the overall scheme of the respective Gospels.

We, therefore, proceed on the assumption that a high degree of scepticism concerning the value of the Gospel traditions as historical documents in the search of the historical Jesus is unwarranted. There are a number of considerations which suggest that the Gospel traditions, in many instances, can be trusted as offering a reliable account of the events they describe. Moreover, an independent corroboration of the Gospels' account of John is provided by the Jewish historian, Josephus, who mentions both John and Jesus in his works, though he says nothing about the relationship between them (*Ant.* 18.63-64, 116-19; 20.200).

2.4 Conclusion

Our survey of the canonical Gospels yields varied and interesting results. First, all four Evangelists attest that John is a forerunner and baptiser. Three Gospel sources attest the following information: John baptises Jesus; John is a prophet; John predicts the imminence of a coming mightier figure with a superior baptism; John is executed by Antipas; unlike Jesus' disciples, the disciples of John fast; Jesus praises John.

The following evidence is found in two Gospel sources: John's preaching includes a call to ethical life-style in view of the coming judgment; John has doubts about Jesus' identity; John's ministry is effective; John is presented as *Elijah-redivivus*; the coming figure baptises with Holy Spirit and fire; Jesus identifies with John's ministry; Jesus commences his Galilean ministry with an identical message to John, but not until John has been imprisoned; Jesus is perceived to be John raised from the dead.

Secondly, our analysis and evaluation of the evidence indicate that there is prima-facie case for accepting the Gospels as historical sources of the life and ministry of Jesus, in contrast to the scepticism displayed by some form critics and other scholars. The Gospel texts can be used, with judicious and appropriate care, for a study of the relationship between John and Jesus. Moreover, the distinction between the fourth Gospel as theological and the synoptics as historical is an artificial one. The synoptists are also theologians. Each Evangelist interprets and adapts the story of the historical Jesus in order to meet the theological needs of his community. If John did not use the synoptics, despite being aware of them (as may have been the case), then the way forward is to assess independently the historical value of his material.

Thirdly, we are sympathetic to the assumptions of the Third Quest, which offer a useful framework for this study.

3. THE CLASSICAL SOURCES

3.1 Introduction

The classical writers such as Philo, Pliny the Elder and Josephus also provide some corroborating evidence for this study. The various patristic accounts of the Essenes seem dependent upon these three classical authors, and consequently, are of no real independent value. Probably the only exception is the Christian writer, Hippolytus of Rome, who lived somewhere in the late second to third century (A.D. 170-236). He mentions the Essenes briefly in the ninth book of his treatise on *The Refutation of All Heresies* (9.18-28). While his account may depend on the information in Josephus' *Jewish War*, he, nevertheless, includes some details, whose authenticity – perhaps even superiority to Josephus – now appears to be confirmed by corroboratory evidence from the DSS.⁸⁰ There may be implied references to the Essenes in I and II Maccabees. Archaeological finds and palaeographical data also give evidence of structures at Qumran which are identified as functional for a community such as the Essenes.⁸¹

We shall examine the classical sources, noting their limitations and usefulness as evidence for this study. We shall also evaluate the hypothesis which identifies the covenanters of Qumran and the producers of the DSS with the Essenes. The results of testing the Qumran community/Essene hypothesis are foundational for our subsequent discussion of John's possible relations with the community.

3.2 Philo Judaeus

Philo lived *circa* 25 B.C. to post A.D. 41. He was a recognised Jewish philosopher and theologian in the Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt. He is

⁸⁰ See §5.5.6.

⁸¹ R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: OUP, 1973), pp. 1-45.

renowned for interpretation and application of the Jewish scriptures. Besides being famed for his allegorical method of biblical exegesis, he also refers to the Essenes.⁸²

Philo seems concerned to present the best of Jewish piety to non-Jews. His apologetic intentions can therefore be seen in the way he expounds the Essene model of virtue and holiness to his Greek readers. For example, he points to their

love of virtue, by their freedom from the love of either money or reputation or pleasure, by self-mastery and endurance, again by frugality, simple living, contentment, humility, respect for law, steadiness and all similar qualities; their love of men by benevolence and sense of equality, and their spirit of fellowship.⁸³

However, Philo gives us some information which is confirmed by a similar account in Josephus, as well as the evidence provided by the DSS. According to Philo, the Essenes had a population of about 4000, and they were mostly farmers, beekeepers, craftsmen of various kinds, together with supervisors of their own communities. The Essenes were unremittingly careful to maintain ritual purity at all times. Philo refers, among other things, to their piety, frugality, practice of common ownership of goods, asceticism, celibacy and their care for the sick (*Quod Omnis* XII [75-87]; *Hypothetica* 11.1-18); and their method of biblical interpretation (*Quod* 80-82). These issues are discussed in detail in chapters 4-6.

3.3 Pliny the Elder

Pliny the Elder (about A.D. 23-79), a highly educated first century Roman writer and geographer, mentions the Essenes in his *Natural History*, written around A.D. 77. Pliny's account contains some vital information about the geographical location of the Essenes and some aspects of their practice. He describes the Essenes as living along the western littoral of the Dead Sea somewhere north of Engedi:

⁸² Philo preserves two essays on the Essenes: *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit* ('That every good man is free') 75-91 and *Hypothetica* (*Apologia pro Iudaeis*) 11.1-18. For further discussion and recent bibliography on Philo, see R. Williamson, 'Philo' in R. J. Coggins & J. L. Houlden eds., *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 1992), pp. 524-44.

⁸³ *Quod Omnis* 84. Unless otherwise indicated, we follow the English translation in the LCL for Philo, Pliny and Josephus, citing the original text, where necessary, for emphasis only. Philo's philosophical intentions are here suggested by the fact that he wrote his treatise *Quod Omnis* in order to extol Stoic philosophy that only the wise are really free.

To the west (of the Dead Sea) the Essenes have put the necessary distance between themselves and the insalubrious shore. They are a people unique of its kind and admirable beyond all others in the whole world, without women and renouncing love entirely, without money, and having for company only the palm trees. Owing to the throng of new-comers, this people is daily reborn in equal numbers; indeed, those whom, wearied by the fluctuations of fortune, life leads to adopt their customs, stream in in great numbers. Thus, unbelievable though this may seem, for thousands of centuries a people has existed which is eternal yet into which no one is born: so fruitful for them is the repentance which others feel for their past lives! Below the Essenes was the town of Engadi (En-Geddi), which yielded only to Jerusalem in fertility and palmgroves but is today become another ash-heap. From there one comes to the fortress of Masada, situated on a rock, and itself near the lake of Asphalt.⁸⁴

He observes that the Essenes live among the palm trees, a description which fits the Qumran vicinity. Pliny's description has received confirmation from a number of eminent scholars. For example, de Vaux in an independent investigation concludes, 'if Pliny is not mistaken and if we are not mistaken, the Essenes of whom he speaks are the community of Qumran'.⁸⁵ Vermes also suggests that Pliny's evidence offers a powerful argument in favour of the Essenes thesis.⁸⁶ However, we must allow for the possibility of other sites near the Dead Sea.

3.4 Flavius Josephus

Perhaps the most important potential witness to the Essenes is Josephus ben Mattathias. Born of an aristocratic priestly family, Josephus lived from A.D. 37/38 to 100.⁸⁷ Known as Flavius Josephus after he became a Roman citizen, he was well educated in biblical law and history. Josephus wrote about the principal religious parties of his day: Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes (*War* 2.19; *Ant* 13.171). Unlike Pliny who was uninformed about the internal practices of the Essenes, Josephus

⁸⁴ *Nat Hist* 5.15.(73). For this translation, see P. R. Callaway, *The History of the Qumran Community: An Investigation*. JSPSup 3 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), p. 82.

⁸⁵ de Vaux, *Archaeology*, pp. 134.

⁸⁶ G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* 2nd edn. (London: SPCK, 1982), p. 127.

⁸⁷ P. Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance* JSPSup 2 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988); L. H. Feldman, 'Flavius Josephus Revisited: The Man, His Writings, and His Significance', in W. Haase and H. Temporini eds., *ANRW* 2.21.2 (NY: de Gruyter, 1984), esp. 822-35; *Josephus and Modern Scholarship 1937-1980* (NY: de Gruyter, 1984), esp. pp. 679-703; T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (London: Duckworth, 1983); S. J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome. His Vita and Development as a Historian* CSCT 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1979); E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)* vol 1 rev. eds. G. Vermes & F. Millar (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973), pp.61-63.

presents us with some insightful information on certain of their fundamental ideals and on the internal organisation of the Essenes. In fact, he even claims to have known the Essenes personally, after having studied with them for a while.⁸⁸

Josephus' account and analyses of the Essenes' ideology and praxis is at first sight plausible. A great deal of his account of events is truthful: first, it is often corroborated by other extant sources; secondly, it appears he makes no attempt to harmonize the internal inconsistencies in his writings; and thirdly, he was an eyewitness to many of the details he incorporates in his work. However, many authorities have urged caution in the use of Josephus as a historical source. For example, being an eye witness does not necessarily mean that Josephus' account and analyses of events offer us an accurate picture of what he reports. Like Philo, Josephus tends to present the Jews favourably to his gentile readers. Josephus therefore writes as an apologist for the Jews and Judaism.⁸⁹

Josephus' apologetic and philosophical interests in the Essenes are borne out by the fact that he, too, depicts the Jewish sects as Greek philosophical schools. The Pharisees are likened to the Stoics, while the Essenes may correspond to the Pythagoreans.⁹⁰ Perhaps in an attempt to present the Essenes as an enlightened sect to his Greek and Roman readers, he writes:

The doctrine of the Essenes is wont to leave everything in the hands of God. They regard the soul as immortal and believe that they ought to strive especially to draw near to righteousness. ...they are of the highest character, devoting themselves solely to agricultural labour. They deserve admiration in contrast to all others who claim their share of virtue because such qualities as theirs were never found before among any Greeks or barbarian people, nay, not even briefly; but have been among them in constant practice and never interrupted since they adopted them from of old.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *Life* 10-12.

⁸⁹ For example, in *Jewish War*, he insists that he was writing a political history in the style of Thucydides (*War* 1.1-18). For further discussion of Josephus' strengths and weaknesses, see M. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome A.D. 66-70* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), pp. 1-25; Cohen, *Josephus*, pp. 232-42; Rajak, *Josephus*, pp. 4-7, 197-201; H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* repr (NY: Ktav, 1967), pp. 1-22; P. E. Hughes, 'The Value of Josephus as a Historical Source', *EvQ* 15 (1943), 179-83.

⁹⁰ *Ant* 5.12; 15.371. The Sadducees may approximate to the Epicureans.

⁹¹ *Ant* 18.18-20a. See T. S. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls* SNTSMS 58 (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), pp. 23-25.

In comparison with Philo, Josephus, too, estimated the Essene population in Palestine at about 4000 (*Ant* 18.20). He also agrees with Philo and Pliny that the Essenes originated in Palestine (*War* 2.119). Moreover, he observes that the Essenes were mainly farmers and craftsmen (*Ant* 18.19b; *War* 2.129).

Josephus further refers to a number of features pertaining to the organisational structure of the Essenes. These include, among others, a strict daily regimen, a common life wherein all things were enjoyed by all members (*War* 2.120-22; *Ant* 18.20b); the importance of purificatory baths before common meals (*War* 2.128-33; cf. *Ant* 18.19); a system whereby the sick and the aged were supported from a common purse (*War* 2.134); phased entrance procedures into the community (*War* 2.137-42); attitudes to women and marriage (*War* 2.120, 160; *Ant* 18.21); avoidance of any form of violence, including even the carrying of weapons, except for the sake of defence when travelling (*War* 2.125). These aspects are discussed below.

Besides giving some insights into the internal structure of the Essenes, Josephus offers a brief description of the significance of JB in the socio-political situation of Palestine during the reign of Herod Antipas (*Ant* 18.116-19).⁹²

It is, however, important at this point to look at some of the differences between the classical sources, and the consequent problems that they create for the historian, and to evaluate their usefulness for any meaningful historical reconstruction.

3.5 The Classical Sources and Historical Investigation

There are conflicts among the classical sources on a number of issues relating to the Essenes, which raise the acute question of their reliability for historical reconstruction. Some of these differences include:

1. Pliny, as noted above, locates the Essenes on the western littoral of the Dead Sea. It is puzzling that Josephus, who presents personal information about them, never mentions any Essene community near the Dead Sea. It has also been argued that the

⁹² See §4.3.4 below for full text and comments.

source upon which Pliny relies postdates the First Jewish War of A.D. 66-70. Consequently, he seems to be writing about a group which settled on the western shore of the Dead Sea after the Romans had destroyed the Essene settlement there, an event which, according to archaeological evidence, occurred around A.D. 68.⁹³

2. Pliny's assertion that the Essene community consisted of individuals who were wearied by the uncertainties of life and the vicissitudes of fortune also appears to conflict with Philo's claim that the Essenes' abandonment of city life was due to the fact that the cities were polluted (*Quod omnis* XII [76]).

3. Philo's claim that the Essene community consisted exclusively of mature men, without children or young men, stands in bold relief against Josephus' claim that the Essenes adopted children in their community (*War* 2.120).

4. There are also inconsistencies between the two writers concerning the Essenes' attitude to women. According to Philo, the Essenes were monastic misogynists: Ἐσσαιῶν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἄγεται γυναῖκα.⁹⁴ Josephus, on the other hand, presents two orders of Essenes, namely, a celibate order and a second order which permitted marriage (*Ant* 18.21; *War* 2.160-1).

5. The apologetic intentions and philosophical interests in the writings of both Philo and Josephus also raise questions about the usefulness of their information for this study.

Nevertheless, admitting that there are genuine discrepancies and inconsistencies in the classical sources does not mean that these are of no value as sources which can contribute to our knowledge of the Essenes. In fact the differences in the classical accounts may be defended as follows:

1. The problem with Pliny's account, the non-Jewish source among the classical sources, is that he is recounting information from other sources, and that his *Natural History* was completed around A.D. 77. While it is difficult to know whether Pliny's

⁹³ O. Betz & R. Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran and the Vatican: Clarifications* trans J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1994), pp. 50-68; A. R. C. Leaney, *The Rule of Qumran and its Meaning: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1966), p. 32.

⁹⁴ For full text, see *Hypothetica* 11.14-17.

report reflects accurately his sources, it is at least certain, as shown above, that he shares a lot in common with both Philo and Josephus.

2. Philo's and, in particular, Josephus' accounts are more relevant and pertinent for our discussion. Both authors are Jews and they refer to the Essenes as their contemporaries. Some account for the differences between them from the sources used by both authors. It has been proposed that Josephus draws occasionally on Philo,⁹⁵ while others postulate a common source, possibly Nicolas of Damascus, who is believed to have been an amanuensis of Herod the Great.⁹⁶ Perhaps the main difference between the two authors derives from their geographical proximity to the Essenes. As observed above, while Josephus can claim personal knowledge of the Essenes because he has studied with them, Philo is not privy to any such information. This, perhaps, may account for some of the discrepancies in their reports.

3. Another factor accounting for the differences between the two writers may be the apologetic interests evident in their reports. Both are concerned to present the Essenes as an enlightened and sophisticated group, comparable to the other groups in the Greco-Roman world. Perhaps Philo's interest in Stoic philosophy, which underlies his *Quod omnis probus*, may explain his report that the Essenes were composed of only mature men without any children and women, in contrast to Josephus' account. Josephus, too, as noted above, is guilty of similar idealising tendencies in his efforts to present Judaism as a sophisticated culture to his Greek readers in the Roman Empire.

Therefore, while recognising the classical authors' underlying concern to laud the piety and virtue of the Essenes, as well as their overall apologetic tendencies – including their religious, philosophical and political biases – and the historiographic environment in which they wrote, it is still reasonable to conclude that their evidence can be trusted as reliable historical information. Furthermore, the evidence from the DSS, which provide inside information about the Essenes, acts as an excellent source with which to compare the classical accounts.

⁹⁵ Schürer, *History* 2.192 note 12.

⁹⁶ Thackeray trans., *Josephus* LCL 2.xxii; M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1961), p. 26.

The above observations indicate that the classical sources, when used critically and with caution, are generally reliable and trustworthy sources of information concerning the Essenes.

3.6 The Identity of the Qumran Community: The Case for the Essene Hypothesis

The question of the identity of the covenanters of Qumran has exercised scholars from the earliest stages of Qumran research, causing profound disagreements on this issue. Here we introduce some of the disagreements and conclude with our assumptions about the identity of the Qumran group.

Scholars have argued that the community at Qumran which produced the DSS had affinities with the covenanters of Damascus, the Essenes, the Sadducees and Pharisees. The last three groups (or four if we include the Zealots) have been referred to by Josephus as αἱρεσεις or philosophies (*Ant* 13.9). Others include the Therapeutae (an Egyptian group of Jewish ascetics which is closely related to the Essenes), and JB's Movement. Some also postulate that the 1QS and some of the other manuscripts discovered near Wadi Qumran, in the northwest shore of the Dead Sea, reveal a monastic group, while the CD seems to indicate a town dwelling group. It is even suspected that non-Essene hands, perhaps the scribes, may have been involved in producing the texts as we now have them. This has led some to postulate a different environment for the origin of the DSS than Qumran itself. Some are also beginning to argue that a substantial portion of the DSS is not in fact a sectarian product, thus questioning the Essene provenance, which has been held by a number of scholars including Sukenik, M. Burrows, F. M. Cross Jr. and A. Dupont-Sommer.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ E. L. Sukenik, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University* ed. N. Avigad (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1955), p. 29; M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956), pp. 273-98; — *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958), pp. 253-74; F. M. Cross Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (London: Duckworth, 1958); A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* trans G. Vermes (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), p. 61; J. H. Charlesworth, 'The Origin and subsequent History of the Authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Four Transitional Phases among the Qumran Essenes', *RQ* 10 (1980), 213-33. For criticism of the Essene theory, see G. R. Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls: The Problem and a Solution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), esp. pp. 100-21. For a good discussion of the debate between Dupont-Sommer and Driver, see

Some maintain that the Qumran group was just one of the many groups that sprang up during the second temple period. For example, it has been suggested that the Qumran sect was a splinter movement of the Hasidim (or 'the pious ones') which broke away from mainstream Judaism during the Hasmonean period.⁹⁸

It has even been proposed by L. Schiffman that the residents of Qumran were not Essenes. Schiffman identifies the Qumran sectarians as Sadducean in outlook, if not actually Sadducees.⁹⁹ Schiffman finds in the so-called 'Letter of the Teacher of Righteousness' (4QMMT)¹⁰⁰ echoes of the series of Pharisaic-Sadducean disputes recorded in the Mishnah.¹⁰¹ It should, however, not surprise us to find that the views of the Sadducees and Qumran sectaries coincided on a number of points. Both groups claimed some connection with the priesthood.¹⁰² Both were conservative on matters relating to the law, opposing what they considered to be the moderating tendencies of the Pharisees.

Schiffman may well be right in observing that the Sadducees described in the Mishnah are not the aristocratic ones mentioned by Josephus, some of whom were concerned with their position of power, status and wealth, because of their this-worldly perspective. Yet his hypothesis suffers from one significant weakness, namely, that it

Callaway, *Qumran Community*, pp. 77-80. The Essene hypothesis is further questioned by C. Roth in his book, *The Historical Background to the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), pp. 81-82.

⁹⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE - 66CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), p. 342; P. R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the 'Damascus Document'* JSOTSup25 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), p. 19.

⁹⁹ L. Schiffman, 'The Sadducean Origins of the Dead Sea Scroll Sect', in H. Shanks ed., *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: SPCK, 1993), pp. 35-49; — 'The New Halakhic Letter (4QMMT) and the Origins of the Dead Sea Sect', *BA* 53 (1990), 64-73.

¹⁰⁰ The contents of this mutilated document include instructions to the priests, based on the Biblical books of Exodus to Deuteronomy, to guard the purity of Jerusalem and, in particular, the temple, in order to protect the people from excessive guilt (4QMMT B 12.26-27). See further discussion in Betz & Riesner, *Jesus*, pp. 36-49.

¹⁰¹ These are mainly questions of ceremonial nature and legal praxis. They include: the date of the celebration of Pentecost (Mish. *Hagigah* ii.4); the ritual purity of the priests who officiated in the sacrifice of the red heifer (Mish. *Para* iii.3-4, 7); and laws on contamination (Mish. *Yadaim* iv.6-7); the question of when false witnesses were given the death penalty (Mish. *Makkoth* i.6); and the question of divorce (Mish. *Yadaim* iv.8).

¹⁰² The origin of the Qumran community goes back to the 'Hasidim' – the devout or pious group (ἁσιδαιοί or חסידים, the Torah faithful or loyalists) – who decried Israel's unfaithfulness to the Torah. The Maccabean revolt of the second century B.C. marks the watershed. A group made up mostly of priests calling themselves the sons of Zadok (who was appointed chief priest in place of Abiathar, when the latter defected to support Adonijah rather than Solomon, 1 Kings 1-2), separated themselves from mainstream Judaism and went into the wilderness. The term 'Sadducee', though shrouded in obscurity, is also commonly understood to derive from Zadok, the high priest, and his descendants. See Schürer, *History* 2.381-414.

is methodologically doubtful to prefer the later evidence from the Mishnah (which was compiled somewhere in the second century A.D.) to that from the classical sources on which the Essene thesis is based. Moreover, some of the doctrines in the Qumran texts, such as belief in the existence of angels, predeterminism and messianism, are at variance with the Sadducean teachings.¹⁰³ In spite of these weaknesses, Schiffman's dissertation has contributed to our understanding about some of the groups that existed in the second temple period.

Another interesting proposition is that the DSS were taken to Qumran for safe keeping by the Jerusalemites who fled the city with their precious manuscripts and valuables, when the First Jewish War became imminent. This 'Jerusalem thesis', put forward by Norman Golb, seeks to highlight what he sees as anomalies, such as the question of marriage and celibacy, within the Essene hypothesis.¹⁰⁴ One advantage of the 'Jerusalem thesis' is that it resolves the problem of disagreements and contradictions between the manuscripts: the DSS are simply seen as representative of a cross section of Jewish literature, rather than the library of a homogeneous group.

The 'Jerusalem thesis', however, has not convinced other experts in the field of Qumran research. First, the theory was formulated prior to the publication of a number of the Qumran texts. Many experts are becoming increasingly convinced that many of the Qumran collections, including most of the commentaries, are autographic, contrary to Golb's conclusion that all the manuscripts, with the exception of the *Copper Scroll* (3Q15), are scribal copies of earlier texts. Secondly, while the DSS are believed to have originated from subtly diverse Jewish communities between the first century B.C and first century A.D., Golb minimises the constant and pervasive Essene teaching and praxis in the manuscripts. Thirdly, Golb underestimates the evidence from Pliny and the other classical sources, which still remains one of the pillars for the Essene hypothesis.¹⁰⁵ In fact, another less known ancient text, claiming to have originated

¹⁰³ *Ant* 13.172-73; *War* 2.164. See the discussion on *Predetermination* and *Messianism* below.

¹⁰⁴ N. Golb, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Perspective', *AS* 58 (1989), 177-207;—'Who Hid the Dead Sea Scrolls?' *BA* 48 (1985), 68-82. On the question of marriage and celibacy, see chapter 5 below.

¹⁰⁵ For further discussion and critique of Golb's 'Jerusalem thesis', see J. C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (London: SPCK, 1994), pp. 95-97.

with Dio Chrysostom (about A.D. 40-112), locates the Essenes on the shores of the Dead Sea. He is reputed to have written that the Essenes formed 'an entire and prosperous city near the Dead Sea, in the centre of Palestine, not far from Sodom'. This evidence, however, is found in a biography of him by Synesius of Cyrene (about A.D. 400).¹⁰⁶

The above summary throws into sharp relief the continuing debate among scholars about the equation: Qumran community—Essenes—authors of the DSS. As discussed below, the Essene movement was very extensive, with members found distributed among the rest of Judaism. The 'Groningen Hypothesis', which attempts to explain the origins of the Essene movement and the Qumran community as separate from each other, accepts, as one of its essential presuppositions, that Qumran arose out of a rift within the Essene movement, to which the founding members of Qumran belonged. Both communities have their ideological roots within Jewish apocalyptic tradition, which flourished in Palestine from the end of the third century B.C to the beginning of the Jewish revolt against Rome in A.D. 66.¹⁰⁷ While not denying the influence of Jewish apocalyptic on the DSS, the 'Groningen Hypothesis' fails to account for the undeniably fundamental similarities between the two groups.¹⁰⁸

It seems to us that none of the above theories offers a serious challenge to the Essene hypothesis, which rests on two principal arguments. First, many experts have noticed an increasing number of remarkable similarities, in beliefs and practices, between the Essene movement and the Qumran community. Secondly, the Essenes and the Qumran Community existed in an identical chronological setting. In general, there is now much scholarly agreement, even if not unanimity, in identifying the Qumran sect with an Essene-type community.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ VanderKam, *Scrolls Today*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁷ F. García Martínez, 'Qumran Origins and Early History: A Groningen Hypothesis', *FO* 25 (1988), 113-36.

¹⁰⁸ For a critique of the 'Groningen Hypothesis,' see T. H. Lim, 'The Wicked Priests of the Groningen Hypothesis', *JBL* 112/3 (1993), 415-25.

¹⁰⁹ Vermes, *Qumran in Perspective*, pp. 116-30; —'The Essenes and History', *JJS* 32 (1981), 18-31; Vermes & Goodman eds., *The Essenes: According to the Classical Sources* vol 1 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), pp. 1-13; Goodman, *Ruling Class of Judaea*, p 81; S. Talmon, *The World of Qumran from Within* (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1989), pp. 61-67; H. Maccoby, *Judaism in the First Century* (London: Sheldon Press, 1989), pp. 17-22. See also F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (London:

Like any human institution, the Qumran community probably underwent some evolutionary changes in terms of its organisational and doctrinal structure throughout its years of existence. On the whole, the points of agreement between the covenanters of Qumran and the Essenes are so numerous and cover such a wide range of categories that, despite noticeable differences, we must agree with Vermes and others that, in general terms, there is a possible identification of the two groups, or that there existed an Essene type of group at Qumran. In this study the terms 'Essenes' and 'Qumran sectaries' will be used interchangeably to refer to the same group.

3.7 Conclusion

The main value of the classical sources is that they furnish us with corroborating evidence for the historical significance of JB, and attest the existence of the Essenes as the covenanters of the Qumran community. The classical sources are influenced by apologetic intentions and philosophical interests, as well as depicting genuine discrepancies and inconsistencies. Like the Gospel accounts, the classical sources are coloured by the biases, interests and presuppositions of their authors. When these limitations are taken into account, the classical sources can provide corroborating data for this study. Moreover, they provide evidence for our working assumption that the Essenes were synonymous with the Qumran community.

Oliphants, 1969), p. 121; W. F. Albright & C. S. Mann, 'Qumran and the Essenes: Geography, Chronology, and Identification of the Sect', in M. Black ed., *The Scrolls and Christianity: Historical and Theological Significance* Theological Collections 11 (London: SPCK, 1969), pp. 11-25; W. H. Brownlee, 'A Comparison of the Covenanters of the Dead Sea Scrolls with Pre-Christian Jewish Sects', *BA* 13 (1950), 49-72.

PART II

THE LINK BETWEEN JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE ESSENES AND THE EARLY CHURCH

4. JOHN THE BAPTIST PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS MINISTRY: A RECONSTRUCTION

4.1 Introduction

Since the discovery of the DSS in 1947, there has been an explosion of interest in the quest for the historical Jesus through an investigation of those pericopae and logia in the Gospels that deal with Jesus and JB. This interest has generated diverse questions and hypotheses such as: Was there a connection between John and the Qumran Essenes? Does John's possible connection with the Essenes offer us the matrix for his dual role as baptiser and prophet? If John is perceived to have been connected to the Essenes, how do we then explain the differences between him and the Qumran sectaries?

In the deliberations which follow, an attempt is made to present an examination and critical evaluation of the question of John's possible contact with Qumran. This suggestion, which has been made by a handful of scholars,¹¹⁰ has not been pursued in any systematic, coherent and detailed manner. We shall examine the evidence about John from the canonical Gospel traditions and the classical sources in order to detect any correspondences or otherwise between him and Qumran.

4.2 The Origins of John

All the four Evangelists are unequivocally concerned with the story of Jesus (Mk 1.1; Lk 1.26-38; Matt 1.1; John 1.1-18). As the protagonist, all the focus of attention is on him. However, to put the ministry of Jesus into perspective, particularly in the scheme of divine activity, the Evangelists have to digress right from the outset, by introducing the preparatory ministry of JB (Mk 1.2-11 and par; John 1.6-9, 15, 19-

¹¹⁰ Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, p. 7; Brownlee, 'John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls' in K. Stendahl ed., *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1958), pp. 33-53; J. A. T. Robinson, 'The Baptism of John and the Qumran Community: Testing a Hypothesis', *HTR* 50 (1957), 175-91.

42). In these introductory sections of the Gospel accounts, John's role as a baptiser and prophet who heralds the coming of the 'mightier one' is clearly underlined. However, the greatest emphasis is placed on his role as the forerunner who readies Israel for Jesus' subsequent appearance. This portrait of John naturally raises questions concerning the significance of his person and ministry.

It has been suggested that, on the historical level, the traditions about Jesus, in comparison to that of John, were more or less fixed at a very early stage, which made it difficult to alter them. Later generations could therefore only embellish and supplement rather than radically change the Jesus tradition.¹¹¹ Could it be that the Baptist movement was not strong enough to exercise a similar influence over the traditions of its leader? And can we detect a subtle attempt by the early Christian community to conceal the facts about the relationship between John and Jesus?

The Christian tradition has for so long consigned John to the role of a harbinger. However, attempts have been made in recent scholarship to show that his importance far exceeds this role of a 'curtain-raiser', both in the Jewish world of his day and in the Gospel tradition. Thus in spite of his supreme role as the herald of Jesus, one can hardly fail to notice his historical importance even in the Gospel narratives, especially his twin role as a baptiser and prophet, and the impact that his preaching had on the people (Matt 3.7-12; Lk 3.7-20).

While the significance of JB is increasingly being recognised in modern scholarship, the critic is faced with enormous difficulties as he attempts to reconstruct the life and ministry of John from the piecemeal and discontinuous information about his birth and the beginning of his public ministry. It appears that all our main sources are mostly concerned with the period of his ministry, and understandably so. There is, therefore, very little explicit information about his early years. This lack of explicit information about the years between his birth and the commencement of his public ministry is unfortunate, since this vital information would enable us to be more positive in our comments about John, amidst recent speculations and sensational disclosures

¹¹¹ E. Bammel, 'The Baptist in Early Christian Tradition', *NTS* 18 (1971-72), pp. 95-128.

about him in the light of the DSS. A knowledge of those years would also help us to know the gestation of those ideas that we find exhibited later on in his ministry.

There is, however, no need for historical despair. Our sources do drop some vital clues and hints in describing John's ministry which may help us to know something about his formative years. By carefully sifting through the evidence, and making responsible inferences – from the direct to the indirect – we can discover, at least, something about the significant influences on John prior to his public appearance.¹¹²

4.3 The Formative Years of John

4.3.1 *The Birth of John*

Among the canonical Gospels, the birth of John is recounted only by the third Evangelist.¹¹³ According to Luke, John was born to a pious elderly priestly father, Zechariah, and mother, Elizabeth, during the reign of Herod (Lk 1.5-7). After his birth and dedication in the temple (Lk 1.8-25. 57-66), Luke indicates that John lived in the wilderness until his public appearance (Lk 1.80).

The formidable problems presented by the Lucan infancy narratives are examined in the Appendix.¹¹⁴ Two results that emerge, however, based on converging lines of evidence, are that JB's priestly origin and his attachment to the wilderness could indeed be historical elements within the Lucan infancy narrative. This conclusion also raises the question of John's probable links with Qumran during the period between his birth and the beginning of his public ministry. In what follows, we evaluate this hypothesis, including JB's priestly origin and the significance of the wilderness in his ministry.

¹¹² It seems that the best way to proceed would be to start from the adult life of John, where the evidence is more explicit, and work our way backwards. To adopt such an approach, however, would not give coherence and continuity to our study, as it would leave part of the work floating in a time vacuum. It seems best to begin with the birth of John, and try to ascertain all that we can about him until the commencement of his public ministry.

¹¹³ See also the extra-canonical Gospel, *Protoevangelium of James* 10-12.

¹¹⁴ Our main conclusion is while the infancy narratives represent a later step in the theological development of the early Church's christology, Luke based its composition on historical information of John's relationship with Jesus, namely that after his baptism by John, Jesus closely identified with John's ministry and remained with him for some time as his disciple on his itineraries, perhaps until John's arrest by Antipas. Furthermore, it is argued that the Lucan notion of John's priestly origin and his attachment to the wilderness both before and during his ministry, could represent historical elements within the Lucan infancy narratives.

4.3.2 *John and the Wilderness*

After his birth and dedication in the temple, Luke indicates that John lived in the wilderness (Lk 1.80). No more details are given, and nothing is heard of John until the commencement of his public ministry in the wilderness, where he exercised the functions of a forerunner, baptiser and prophet. It is, however, significant to note that according to Luke, John received instructions for his ministry while he was still in the wilderness: ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (3.2). Luke's picture of the boy John being raised in the wilderness until the beginning of his ministry, is confirmed by Mark who also indicates John's attachment to the wilderness before and during his ministry (Mk 1.4-5 and par).

Matthew inserts ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας in order not to leave his readers in doubt as to which wilderness he has in mind. The Q material also testifies of John's ministry in the wilderness. In his eulogy of John, Jesus asked the crowd, Τί ἐξήλθατε εἰς τὴν ἔρημον θεάσασθαι; (Q=Matt 11.7//Lk 7.24). The fourth Evangelist is also aware of the tradition that John conducted his ministry in the wilderness and baptised either in or near the Jordan river (John 1.23, 28).

What is intriguing here is that as the son of a priest, and possibly, according to Luke's account, the first son of Zechariah, John would naturally be expected to follow his father's vocation.¹¹⁵ One would, therefore, expect to find John in the temple exercising his priestly office and not living in the wilderness, preaching and administering the rite of baptism. What happened to John during this intervening period – between his birth and the beginning of his public career – to make him radically repudiate his priestly heritage and social position? In other words, why did he change the course of his natural vocation? Are there any clues about John and his ministry that may offer us any satisfactory explanation to the above question?

¹¹⁵ A number of scholars accept the Lucan presentation of John's priestly origin as valid historical evidence. These include: J. Steinmann, *Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition* trans M. Boyes (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1958), p. 59; J. Danielou, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity* trans S Attanasio (Baltimore: Helicon, 1958), p. 18; O. Cullmann, 'The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity', *JBL* 74 (1955), 213-26.

W. H. Brownlee makes an interesting but speculative suggestion that Zechariah, concerned with John's future (perhaps for lack of confidence in the Jerusalem priesthood, or for fear of its future during the reign of Herod the Great), might have sent him to be raised as a priest with the Essenes. Their strict regimen and practice of celibacy would have not attracted many priests to the group, thus guaranteeing John's future as a priest in the community.¹¹⁶

Furthermore, it has been proposed that just before his final initiation into the Qumran community, John left Qumran as a postulant with some dissenters, some of whom became his faithful disciples. He would therefore have been fully conversant with the monastic life, the hermeneutical principles of the community, as well as its rules of asceticism. John's entry into the community would have meant that he was alienated from the temple cultus in Jerusalem, where his father exercised his priesthood. At Qumran John would have spent some time studying the prophetic books, especially the prophet Isaiah and his predictions for the future. He would also have received the baptism of water which marked the entry into the novitiate, and practised the piety of the founder of the community, the Teacher of Righteousness.¹¹⁷

Yet another interesting theory has been put forward by J. A. T. Robinson. He proposes that John might have been sent, perhaps on the death of his parents, to be brought up in the desert discipline of Qumran.¹¹⁸ According to Josephus, the celibate monastic sect at Qumran adopted the children of others while they were young in order to instruct them in the ideology and philosophy of the community (*War* 2.120). Moreover, in Luke 1.7b, John's parents were old at the time of his birth (καὶ ἀμφότεροι προβεβηκότες ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῶν ἦσαν). Arising out of the

¹¹⁶ Brownlee, 'John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 33-53. For similar views, see J. Danielou, *The Work of John the Baptist* trans J. Horn (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), p. 38; — *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity*, p. 16; L. Mowry, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early Church* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 134; Burrows, *More Light*, pp. 56-57; J. Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 293.

¹¹⁷ Steinmann, *Saint John*, p. 60.

¹¹⁸ J. A. T. Robinson, 'The Baptism of John and the Qumran Community', pp. 175-91; J. M. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958), pp. 163-65; A. S. Geyser, 'The Youth of John the Baptist: A Deduction from the Break in the Parallel Account of the Lucan Infancy Story', *NovT* 1 (1956), pp. 70-75.

above proposition is the question of whether going to Qumran represented a break with his parents who were loyal to the temple? (Lk 1.6, 8-9). While these suggestions must remain highly speculative, it is, nevertheless, significant to note from the Gospel accounts that John began his ministry not in the temple, but with a close attachment to the wilderness.

The term 'wilderness' has engendered a lot of discussion.¹¹⁹ It has been suggested that the geographical location of the wilderness where John conducted his prophetic and baptising activity (Mk 1.4-5 and par) was in close proximity to the Qumran community. This suggestion, of course, opens up the question of the meaning of the term 'wilderness'.¹²⁰ It has been argued that the banks of the Jordan where John carried out his baptising activity can hardly be described as part of the wilderness.¹²¹ W. Marxsen, for instance, argues that while Mark 1.4-5 conflates the two traditions of wilderness preacher and Jordan baptiser, the latter tradition is the only authentic one. Thus for him, Mark employs the wilderness tradition because it is consistent with his theological purpose, rather than as an actual geographical area. Marxsen's distinction between the two traditions is based on the assumption that the wilderness and the Jordan valley cannot be taken to refer to the same area because the first suggests a dry area, while the latter indicates the presence of water.¹²²

That conclusion, however, is based on a superficial reading of the Gospel evidence. For example, while Luke seems to separate the two regions (Lk 3.3; 4.1), perhaps due to his lack of familiarity with the geography of Judea, Mark does not state

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of the wilderness symbolism, see Meyer, *Aims*, pp. 115-16; Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypotheses', *NTS* 36 (1990), 359-74; R. A. Horsley, 'Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus: Their Principal Features and Social Origins', *JSNT* 26 (1986), 3-27; — "Like One of the Prophets of Old": Two Types of Popular Prophets at the Time of Jesus', *CBQ* 47 (1985), 435-63.

¹²⁰ G. Kittel, 'ἐρημος, κτλ.' TDNT 2.657-60; S. Talmon, 'The Desert Motif' in the Bible and in Qumran Literature', in A. Altmann ed., *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 31-63; U. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness* SBT 39 (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 15-61.

¹²¹ M. D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: A. & A. Black, 1991), p. 36.

¹²² Marxsen supports his arguments by positing that neither the fourth Gospel nor the *Gospel of the Ebionites* seems to be aware of the wilderness tradition, and that if the wilderness tradition is removed from 1.4 the thought flows smoothly through 1.4-5. But notice that in the fourth Gospel, John is identified with the wilderness tradition by the citation of Isa 40.3 in 1.23 (cf. 1.28; 3.26, 10.40). See Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, pp. 30-38; Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, p. 246.

the exact geographical location of the wilderness where John carried out his baptising activity, though a wilderness in the vicinity of the Jordan is implied (Mk 1.4-5). Matthew simply indicates that it was in the wilderness of Judea, ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ Ἰουδαίας (Matt 3.1), while Q implies the lower Jordan valley (Matt 11.7//Lk 7.24).¹²³ According to the fourth Gospel, John's baptising activity took place πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου (John 1.28; cf. 1.23; 3.26; 10.40), which may indicate the lower Jordan valley. What is significant here is that the wilderness tradition, which was part of the overall Baptist tradition, has been preserved by all the Evangelists.

Funk suggests that in both the LXX and the NT ἡ ἔρημος is generally used with reference to the wilderness of Sinai (which is out of the question here), or to the wilderness of Judea (which is in the vicinity of the west bank of the Dead Sea) and possibly the Jordan valley. After a detailed discussion of ἡ ἔρημος, both on the basis of grammatical and lexical evidence and in connection with its occurrence in Lk 3.2, he concludes that this phrase consistently denoted the localised wilderness of Judea.¹²⁴

The term 'wilderness' may also mean a lonely, uninhabited and uncultivated area, but not necessarily deprived of water.¹²⁵ It may, therefore, include the western part of the Jordan to the north of the Dead Sea.¹²⁶ Thus, Josephus describes the Jordan river as meandering through a long wilderness before reaching the Dead Sea (*War* 3.515). Brownlee also suggests that there is no question that John's ministry was conducted in the wilderness of Judea, an area which is generally defined as the stretch of hot desolate hills along the west bank of the Dead Sea.¹²⁷

Linked to the difficult question of determining the meaning of the term 'wilderness', is the problem of specifying the location of John's ministry in the Jordan

¹²³ C. C. McCown, 'The Scene of John's Ministry and Its Relation to the Purpose and Outcome of His Mission', *JBL* 59 (1940), 113-31.

¹²⁴ R. W. Funk, 'The Wilderness', *JBL* 78 (1959), 205-14. For further discussion, see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* AB 28 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 388-89; J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea* trans J. Strugnell SBT 26 (London: SCM, 1959), p. 11.

¹²⁵ S. Abrahamsky, 'Wilderness' *EJ* 16.512; McCown, 'The Scene of John's Ministry and Its Relation to the Purpose and Outcome of His Mission', *JBL* 59 (1940), 113-31.

¹²⁶ C. Wilson, 'The Wilderness of Judea' *HDB* 2.792.

¹²⁷ Brownlee, 'John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 33-53.

valley. According to G. D. Jordan, the course of the Jordan river follows a north-south route through the Great Rift, feeding the Huleh Lake, the Sea of Galilee and finally the Dead Sea, where it terminates. The southern route between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea is approximately sixty-five miles, though the circuitous and meandering nature of the river increases the distance about three-fold. The river divides into a number of tributaries, many of which are not perennial. This means that if there is no consistent water source at the head of the river bed, then the water courses are bound to dry up until a seasonal water deluge.

Jordan gives more vivid details about the course of the river. Just south of the Sea of Galilee, the land is cultivable without irrigation. These arable fields permit occupation and settlement. Further south, the terrain changes, with climatic conditions approximating those of a desert. In this dry and desolate region, the river assumes a more prominent role as the lifeline for both flora and fauna. These areas could be dangerous and inaccessible, especially during the rainy season, when the river carries down with it huge sedimentary deposits of clay and grayish-white marls that form precipitous and barren slopes.¹²⁸

However, as the river approaches the Dead Sea, the valley widens to include more habitable areas with springs and vegetation. Badia has pointed out that at the time when John carried out his ministry, there were a number of settlements such as Phasaelis, Bethannabris, Abila, Livias, and Rameh within the Jordan valley.¹²⁹ It is possible that people from these cities formed the bulk of John's audience. Others might have come from the outlying areas as far away as Jerusalem and beyond (Mk 1.5, 9 and par).¹³⁰ The likelihood is that most of the people would have come because of hearsay reports from travellers and others who had heard this fiery preacher in the wilderness. There is also no reason to doubt the evidence from the fourth Gospel that

¹²⁸ G. D. Jordan, 'Jordan River' *MPEB* 2.1210-11.

¹²⁹ L. F. Badia, *The Qumran Baptism and John the Baptist's Baptism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980), p. 6.

¹³⁰ Hollenbach is of the view that it was impossible for John to have preached in the wilderness, and, therefore, suggests that he preached in the populated areas, even in Jerusalem. —'Social Aspects', pp. 850-75.

the temple authorities sent a delegation to cross-examine John as he preached in the desert (John 1.19).

Furthermore, Josephus, in his account of John's arrest and execution by Antipas, attests to John's preaching and baptising ministry.¹³¹ In his account, however, Josephus does not mention any connection between John and a desert location or the Jordan river. Nevertheless, if John was arrested within Antipas's territories of Galilee and Perea – which is most likely since he was taken to Machaerus, a fortress situated on the southern borders of Perea – then we can posit a location somewhere in the wilderness of Perea, or on the desert side of the Jordan valley near the Dead Sea, as a plausible venue for his ministry shortly before his arrest. In this area of the wilderness region of the Jordan, not far from Nabatea, JB could have come into contact with the Nabateans who might have heard his rebuke and condemnation of Antipas' treatment of the daughter of their king, thus fuelling an already explosive political situation.¹³²

It appears that the wilderness where John conducted his baptising ministry may not have been far from the Dead Sea, in the vicinity of Qumran.¹³³ If this conclusion is correct, then we are further led to consider the possibility of John's initial contact with the covenanters of Qumran, from where he might have received his call by God to proclaim his distinctive prophetic message and perform his rite of baptism. Scobie rightly suggests that the close proximity of John's wilderness ministry to Qumran makes a connection with the community possible.¹³⁴

Some are convinced that John's choice of the wilderness location was a deliberate prophetic gesture. Murphy-O'Connor observes that it was not accidental that John began his ministry at the exact location where Elijah had disappeared (2 Kings 2.4-

¹³¹ See §4.3.4.

¹³² Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, pp. 90-91. See §4.3.4 for further discussion.

¹³³ P. Benoit, 'Qumran and the New Testament', in J. Murphy-O'Connor ed., *Paul and Qumran: Studies in New Testament Exegesis* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), pp. 1-30. Benoit, however, questions whether this justifies connecting John with the Essenes. It is true, as Benoit points out, that the hermit Bannus also lived in the desert on an austere diet, dressed and even practised ablutions just like John, and yet nobody connects him with the the sectarians. However, it must be noted that Josephus' account of Bannus, not being of the same depth as that of John, prevents any plausible connection from being established between him and Qumran. See *Life* 11-12.

¹³⁴ Scobie, *John the Baptist*, p. 39.

11).¹³⁵ However, having rightly noted the prophetic implications of John's choice of location for his ministry, it is rather disappointing that Murphy-O'Connor should fail to raise the question of how John came to develop his prophetic stance in the first place. From what we know about the OT prophetic tradition, a prophet did not arise without preparation, or at least some sort of encounter with God: for example, the schools of the prophets founded by Samuel at Bethel, Gilgal, Rama and elsewhere, where prospective prophets received their instruction concerning the prophetic tradition (1 Sam 10.5; 19.20; 2 Kings 2.3, 5; 4.38); the preparation of Moses for his prophetic ministry in the wilderness of Midian (Exod 3.1-4.31); as well as the call of Samuel, Jeremiah and Ezekiel for their prophetic service (1 Sam 2-3; Jer 1.5-19; Ezek 1-3).¹³⁶

Eisenman and Wise have drawn attention to the possible Qumran interest in charismatic prophetic figures like Elijah. Though not mentioned by name, it would be imprudent to conclude that the authors and recipients of the DSS, including the Essenes, were unaffected by the charismatic miracle-working prophets of the Elijah tradition, who, according to Josephus, proliferated in the first century A.D.¹³⁷ In the *Brontologion* (4Q318), with its evocation of rain and connection with eschatological judgement, Eisenman and Wise find an allusion to the first archetype in this tradition connected to the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17-18; cf. James 5.17-18).¹³⁸

It is possible that John's early years at Qumran, with its emphasis on a strict study of the law and prophets, were where the seeds of his future prophetic ministry were sown and nurtured. It is not surprising therefore that when we encounter John again after his birth (Lk 1.80), he is a well-groomed prophet poised for action.

4.3.3 *The Voice in the Wilderness Motif*

As with the Essenes, John is also portrayed as the 'voice in the wilderness'. For example, Mark's brief introductory superscription, Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

¹³⁵ Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus' 359-74.

¹³⁶ See also Hosea 1.1; Joel 1.1; Amos 1; Jonah 1.1-2; Micah 1.1; Zeph 1.

¹³⁷ For a recent summary of Josephus' perspective concerning the prophetic ministry in Second Temple Judaism, see Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 307-48.

¹³⁸ R. H. Eisenman & M. Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1992), pp. 52, 258-63.

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ] (Mk 1.1), is followed by an OT quotation which has a loose syntactical relationship with the heading.¹³⁹ According to Mark, John's prophetic appearance in the wilderness was in line with prophetic prediction:

2. Καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἠσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ,
 Ἴδου ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου,
 ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου.
3. φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ,
 Ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου,
 εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ, (Mk 1.2-3//Matt 3.3//Lk 3.4-6).¹⁴⁰

Verse 2bc is further attested by Q in the context of Jesus' praise of John (Matt 11.10//Lk 7.27), while verse 3ac is used by JB to identify himself as the 'voice of the one crying in the wilderness' in the fourth Gospel (John 1.23). The multiple attestation of this tradition is significant, as shown below.

Textually, the above quotation is a composite citation of three OT passages: (i) verse 2b corresponds to Exod 23.20-21 (LXX); (ii) verse 2c to Mal 3.1; and (iii) verse 3 to Isa 40.3 (LXX). The original context of Exod 23.20-21 speaks of an admonition to Israel to heed an angel of the Lord, who was despatched to guard Israel on the journey from Egypt to the promised land. The passage in Mal 3.1 also refers to the messenger of God sent to prepare the way of the Lord. According to Mal 3.23 (LXX 4.5), that messenger is identified as Elijah. In rabbinic exegesis, the quotations from Exodus and Malachi were later combined to identify the messenger as Elijah.¹⁴¹

The third and final quotation from Isa 40.3, which marks the beginning of Deutero-Isaiah's prophecy, introduces God's plan to redeem Israel from exile by a new Exodus and, by implication, a new prophet. It is not clear if the Evangelists realised the composite nature of this citation. Nevertheless, by setting this quotation within the

¹³⁹ R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8.26* WBC 34A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), p. 7; H. Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* NCB (London: Oliphants, 1976), pp. 67-68; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indexes* 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 153.

¹⁴⁰ Luke extends the Isaianic quotation (40.3-5) probably in order to express his theme of universalism of salvation in Lk 3.6. He, however, omits 40.5a.

¹⁴¹ Strack & Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* 1.597; *Exod Rab.* 23.20.

Baptist traditions, they prepare the stage for John against the background of redemptive history. John is the new prophet who will prepare the people for the age of salvation.¹⁴² It may be that this interpretation – which became attached to the prophetic status of John – was based on the popular opinion that he was Elijah-*redivivus*.¹⁴³

The Isaianic quotation underscores John's prophetic status, which is unequivocally attested in Mark and Q, where he was understood by a large segment of the population to be a prophet in the similitude of Elijah (Mk 11.32 and par; Lk 7.26//Matt 11.9). The synoptic Gospels' introductions of John as a prophet – through the style of his preaching and in the manner of his appearance (Mk 1.4-6 and par) – are reminiscent of the classic OT prophetic introductions. Notice in particular how Luke's introduction, 'the word of God came to John' (Lk 3.2a), recalls the revelation of God's word to the earlier prophets (Hos 1.1; Jer 1.1-3, 13; 2.1).

Similarly, the Essenes' isolation from their countrymen was motivated by their determination to follow the dictates of God. They, too, applied Isaiah's vision of God coming to Israel on a prepared and level highway through the desert to themselves. In 1QS 8.12b-16a we read:

And when these become members of the Community in Israel according to all these rules, they shall separate from the habitation of ungodly men and shall go into the wilderness to prepare the way of Him; as it is written, *Prepare in the wilderness the way of... make straight in the desert a path for our God* (Isa. xl, 3). This (path) is the study of the Law which He commanded by the hand of Moses, that they may do according to all that has been revealed from age to age, and as the Prophets have revealed by his Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁴

According to the above statement, the sectaries considered themselves the prophetic and divinely appointed instrument for the task of preparing the way for God's coming to Israel. To them had been assigned the responsibility of preparing for the eschatological arrival of the messianic age. By their wilderness retreat, they sought to

¹⁴² Notice that by the use of this composite citation to identify the appearance and ministry of John in the wilderness, when John does appear, the reader already knows the correct relationship between him and Jesus.

¹⁴³ For a counter argument that John presented himself as Elijah-*redivivus*, see J. A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London: SCM, 1962), p. 31; M. Cleary, 'The Baptist of History and Kerygma', *ITQ* 54 (1988), 211-27.

¹⁴⁴ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* 3rd edn. (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 73. Hereafter cited *DSSE*. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the Dead Sea Scrolls are from the *DSSE*.

relive Israel's history when God reminded the people of the promise of covenant and election made to Abraham, and their response to obey the Mosaic law. Their movement into the wilderness was also to prepare for the imminent expectation of the eschatological messianic figures.¹⁴⁵

Thus for the sectaries the allusion to Isa 40.3 implied both a physical movement and a dimension of self-understanding – directing their actions and enabling them to prepare themselves for the eschatological arrival of the messianic figures. It has been suggested that while part of the community supported the *literal movement into the wilderness*, there were some who did not see this physical separation as necessary for the group's self-understanding. Therefore, Isa 40.3 is best understood as being used both literally and metaphorically.¹⁴⁶ The metaphorical use is supported by the paucity of the term 'wilderness' in the Qumran texts. However, as Talmon rightly points out while the wilderness invokes the Sinai theophany and the giving of the law, it is also the setting for Israel's disobedience and punishment (cf. CD 3.6-9). The scarcity of the term 'wilderness' may be explained by this negative aspect of the pentateuchal desert tradition.¹⁴⁷

To conclude, it appears that the voice in the wilderness motif could be an historical element well embedded in the Gospel tradition. This is evident by its multiple attestation. While it is not entirely clear whether the Evangelists realised the composite nature of the citation, it is significant that Jesus refers to it in order to underline the prophetic status of John (Q=Matt 11.9-10//Lk 7.26-27). Furthermore, the Evangelists set this quotation in conjunction with the Baptist traditions in order to place JB against the background of redemptive history. This interpretation, which may help to account for the impact of JB's prophetic ministry, was probably based on the popular opinion which saw him as *Elijah-redivivus*.

¹⁴⁵ IQS 9.11; Burrows, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 383.

¹⁴⁶ For further discussion of the literal and metaphorical application of Isa 40.3, see G. J. Brooke, 'Isaiah 40.3 and the Wilderness Community', in G. J. Brooke with F. G. Martínez eds., *New Qumran Texts and Studies: Proceedings of the First Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies Paris 1992* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 117-32.

¹⁴⁷ Talmon, 'Desert Motif', in *Biblical Motifs*, pp. 31-63

Like JB, the Qumran sectaries applied the Isaianic quotation to themselves. They perceived themselves as the prophetic and divinely appointed instrument charged with the responsibility of preparing both physically and mentally for the imminent eschatological arrival of the messianic age. Here the similarity between JB and the sectaries is very striking.

4.3.4 *Baptism and Ethical Behaviour*

The foregoing discussion further underlines another important parallel between JB and the Qumran community. Both practised the rite of baptism and called for repentance and an ethical lifestyle. In fact, the strong similarity between the baptismal ideology of the community and John has led some to postulate that the lustrations at Qumran, rather than the later proselyte baptism, may offer a plausible background to John's baptismal practice.¹⁴⁸

The Essenes' concern for purity is reflected in numerous references in the DSS. For example, there is a clear instruction to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane, and to refrain from maltreating the poor, the fatherless and the widows among them:

They shall take care to act according to the exact interpretation of the Law during the age of wickedness. They shall separate from the sons of the Pit, and shall keep away from the unclean riches of wickedness acquired by vow or anathema or from the Temple treasure; they shall not rob the poor of His people, to make of widows their prey and of the fatherless their victim (Isa x, 2). They shall distinguish between clean and unclean, and shall proclaim the difference between holy and profane. They shall keep the Sabbath day according to its exact interpretation... They shall love each man his brother as himself; they shall succour the poor, the needy, and the stranger (CD 6.16-21).

Those outside the community were considered to be impure, whereas those within were commonly described as pure (1QS 3.2-3; 6.17-17, 25; 7.3, 16, 19). The

¹⁴⁸ Those who argue in favour of an early date for proselyte baptism (that it antedates Christianity), include K. Pusey, 'Jewish Proselyte Baptism', *ExpTim* 95 (1983-84), 141-45; Vermes, 'Baptism and Jewish Exegesis: New Light from Ancient Sources', *NTS* 4 (1957-58), 308-19; J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* trans D. Cairns (London: SCM, 1960), esp. pp. 24-30; T. F. Torrence, 'Proselyte Baptism', *NTS* 1 (1954-55), 150-54; H. H. Rowley, 'Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John', *HUCA* 15 (1940), 313-34; I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* First Series (Cambridge: CUP, 1917), pp. 18-32. For counter arguments, see D. Smith, 'Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John', *ResQ* 25 (1982), 13-32; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, pp. 95-102; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1962), p. 23; T. M. Taylor, 'The Beginnings of Jewish Proselyte Baptism', *NTS* 2 (1955-56), 193-98.

Essenes' concern with purity is matched by a corresponding emphasis on ablutions. There is a proliferation of references to ablutions in different contexts within the Qumran literature. For example, 'No man shall wear soiled garments, or garments brought to the store, unless they have been washed with water or rubbed with incense' (CD 11.3-4). There are also purity regulations for washing vessels (CD 10.12).¹⁴⁹

With regard to the practice of immersions, which is the main focus of attention in this section, CD 10.10-13 stipulates that there must be sufficient quantity of water to cover the postulant completely:

No man shall bathe in dirty water or in an amount too shallow to cover a man. He shall not purify himself with water contained in a vessel. And as for the water of every rock-pool too shallow to cover a man, if an unclean man touches it he renders its water as unclean as water contained in a vessel.¹⁵⁰

This passage demonstrates that immersion was a necessary condition for purity at Qumran. Archaeological remains at Qumran reveal an elaborate water system containing cisterns accessed by stone steps, which could have been used for either immersions or for water storage.¹⁵¹

The Qumran sectaries further taught that simply immersing oneself in water without the corresponding repentance and a life of moral uprightness availed nothing:

He shall not be reckoned among the perfect; he shall neither be purified by atonement, nor cleansed by purifying waters, nor sanctified by seas and rivers, nor washed clean with any ablution. Unclean, unclean shall he be. For as long as he despises the precepts of God he shall receive no instruction in the Community of His counsel (1QS 3.4-6; cf 1.16-2.18; 4.19-22).

The above passage suggests that a postulant's sins could only be atoned for by God.¹⁵² Neither the effects of the cleansing water nor the postulant's own atonement could purify him, unless he embraced the precepts of God and the instructions of the

¹⁴⁹ For a more comprehensive discussion of Qumran purity and ablutions, see Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 135-62.

¹⁵⁰ Later rabbinic ruling required 40 *seahs* of water for immersion of a man, a quantity roughly equal to 100 gallons of water (*Mish. Mikw.* 7.6).

¹⁵¹ de Vaux, *Archaeology*, pp. 131-32; E. F. Sutcliffe, *The Monks of Qumran: As Depicted in the Dead Sea Scrolls with Translations in English* (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), pp. 26-28; cf. — Sutcliffe, 'Baptism and Baptismal Rites at Qumran?' *HeyJ* 1 (1960), 179-88; F. M. Cross, *Library of Qumran*, pp. 67-68; Brownlee, 'John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 33-53; C. Fritsch, *The Qumran Community: Its History and Scrolls* (NY: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 5-8.

¹⁵² The question of the identity of the persons referred to in the passage is of less importance for our argument at this point. As far as the Essenes were concerned, whoever was outside the community was impure, and therefore not part of the true Israel. See chapter 6 for further discussion.

community. Notice that the defilement in question is that arising from a wrong attitude to God and his moral law. Moreover, there is a hint that the only effective immersions were those practised by the community, because to them had been entrusted the correct interpretation of the Mosaic law.¹⁵³ Notice further that the efficacy of the cleansing could only come about when accompanied by the correct spiritual virtues. The virtues of obedience and piety which must be exemplified in the life of the postulant even prior to immersion are clearly outlined in 1QS 5.7-11, 13-14:

Whoever approaches the Council of the Community shall enter the Covenant of God in the presence of all who have freely pledged themselves. He shall undertake by a binding oath to return with all his heart and soul to every commandment of the Law of Moses in accordance with all that has been revealed of it to the sons of Zadok, the Keepers of the Covenant and Seekers of His will, and to the multitude of the men of His truth and to walking in the way of His delight. And he shall undertake by the Covenant to separate from all the men of falsehood who walk in the way of wickedness...They shall not enter the water to partake of the pure Meal of the saints, for they shall not be cleansed unless they turn from their wickedness: for all who transgress His word are unclean.

The implication of the above passage is that those outside the community, who were not willing to repent of their wickedness, remained impure and therefore could not undergo immersion.

Thus, in consonance with the Essenes' concern for purity, whoever wanted to join the community must be true and upright, having first confessed his sins and experienced inner conversion in his life. Eschewing sin and living a pure and righteous lifestyle were important tenets of this conversionary repentance (CD 2.4b-5a; *Nat Hist* 5.17.4). Part of the conversionary experience was to accept the covenant established by God in the past and now represented by the elect people (1QS 5.22). Furthermore, conversion from sin was also the consequence of the postulant's return to God's covenant (1QH 6.6, 14.21, 24). Conversion from sin was perceived as the work of God's grace and love: 'He shall admit into the Covenant of Grace all those who have freely devoted themselves to the observance of God's precepts' (1QS 1.8; cf. 4.4; CD 8.17). Mercy and justification were understood by the sectaries to be the free gifts of God (1QS 2.1; 11.2-5).

¹⁵³ See §5.3.

It appears from the above evidence that the Essenes attached sacramental significance to the ritual use of water for immersions. Those within the community who repented of their sins, obeyed the law of Moses and practised immersions were the true Israel, who would escape the wrath of God. What is not clear is the frequency of baptism. It has been suggested that the procedure regarding the entry of a novice into the community may offer us a clue to this question. According to the penal code of the community in 1QS 6.14-7.27, the postulant was excluded from the 'purity of the congregation/many' for the first year.¹⁵⁴ At this stage, he was prohibited from participating in the 'pure meal' of the community (1QS 6.16-17). He was further excluded from the 'drink of the congregation' until he had completed a second year under close observation in the community (1QS 6.20-23). It may be that the postulant's final initiation into the community, on completion of his novitiate, was marked by a special baptism, distinct from the daily ablutions practised in the community.

The above suggestion may be supported by the independent evidence of Josephus, who also gives us insight into the inner structure of the Essenes. Josephus observes that an aspirant for membership was admitted subject to a probationary period of one year. After giving proof of his suitability, the candidate was then admitted into the community, and permitted 'to share the purer waters of purification' (καθαρωτέρων τῶν πρὸς ἀγνείαν ὑδάτων μεταλαμβάνει[ν]).¹⁵⁵ Josephus' account may correspond to the special baptism that characterised the end of either the first or the second year of the novitiate noted in 1QS 6.14-23.

It is also interesting to note that the Qumran sectaries branded their opponents, including those who would not join them and submit to their ethic and ideals, as infidels, and vituperatively applied the following epithets to them: 'sons of darkness'

¹⁵⁴ According to Dupont-Sommer, the phrase 'purity of many' seems to mean something very specific here. 'It is probably the name given to the communal centre, to the house where the brethren met for their meals and for their sessions, and to the adjacent pool where they all bathed together. The person undergoing punishment was forbidden all access to this holy spot'. —*The Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes: New Studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls* trans R. D. Barnett (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., 1954), p. 88.

¹⁵⁵ *War* 2.137-38. Sutcliffe, 'Baptism and Baptismal Rites at Qumran', 179-88.

(1QM 1.1); 'hosts of Belial' (1QM 15.2-3); 'men of the pit' or 'men of falsehood' (1QS 9.16-17); 'the unfaithful' or 'liar' (1QpHab 1.1-2); 'the wicked priest' (1QpHab 8.8); or 'the spouter of lies' (1QpHab 10.9). The sectarians also raised criticisms of the religious and political establishment in Jerusalem, which might have included the Pharisees and the Sadducees. In 1QH 5.27-28 the enemies of the community are described as serpents:

And like (serpents) which creep in the dust, so do they let fly [their poisonous darts], viper's [venom] against which there is no charm; and this has brought incurable pain, a malignant scourge within the body of Thy servant, causing [his spirit] to faint and draining his strength so that he maintains no firm stand.

The above ideology of the Essenes is closely matched by the activities of John. Scholars are almost unanimous that one of the most secure pieces of historical data concerning JB is that he engaged in a rite of water baptism, and that he baptised Jesus.¹⁵⁶ This claim is verifiable, first of all, on the basis of the criterion of multiple attestation (or the cross section).¹⁵⁷ This criterion or index concentrates on the sayings, deeds or actions of Jesus that are attested in more than one independent literary source or genre.¹⁵⁸ The baptism of John is attested in the Gospel tradition, including Mark, Q, and the fourth Gospel, as well as in the account of Josephus.¹⁵⁹

Secondly, that baptism was a prominent and distinctive aspect of his ministry explains why John was nicknamed the 'Baptiser' (Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων), or the 'Baptist' (Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής) in both Josephus and the Gospel tradition.¹⁶⁰ In addition, John was so much identified with this baptismal activity that his name and the rite became almost synonymous. Thus the different categories of people that we encounter in the Gospel narratives in connection with John, including his own

¹⁵⁶ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 11; Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, p. 131.

¹⁵⁷ The literature on the rules or criteria that are applied in helping us to reach a decision about what material most probably goes back to the historical Jesus is extensive. For discussion and bibliography of these criteria, see Sanders & Davies, *Studying*, pp. 301-34; R. H. Stein, 'The "Criteria" for Authenticity', *Gospel Perspectives* 1.225-63; D. G. A. Calvert, 'An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus', *NTS* 18 (1971-72). 209-19.

¹⁵⁸ Meyer, *Aims*, pp. 23-113, esp. 86.

¹⁵⁹ *Ant.* 18.116. This passage is discussed below.

¹⁶⁰ Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων occurs in Mk 1.4; 6.14, 24, while Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής occurs in all the synoptic Gospels though Matthew and Luke use it extensively (Mk 6.25; 8.28; Matt 3.1; 11.11, 12; 14.2, 8; 16.14; 17.13; Lk 7.20, 33; 9.19). In the fourth Gospel neither title nor nickname occurs. As indicated above, the fourth Evangelist stresses the subservient role of John as the supreme witness of Jesus.

disciples, Jesus' disciples, the ordinary people, the religious establishment and political leaders, all spoke of him with reference to his baptism.¹⁶¹

Thirdly, it is significant to note that the criterion followed in finding an acceptable witness to replace Judas, had to be one who had been in their company 'beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he (Jesus) was taken up from us' (Acts 1.21-22). This passage presents the baptism of John as marking the beginning of Jesus' public life. Luke, in narrating a speech of Paul in a context which portrays John as the forerunner of Jesus, also describes John as one who 'preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel' (Acts 13.24). That the baptism of John is firmly embedded in the Gospel tradition cannot be gainsaid.

Fourthly, the Gospel evidence (Mk 1.4/Lk 3.3) signifies John's ministry as κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. Despite the fact that repentance and forgiveness are ideas current in Judaism and early Christianity, notice that the precise phrase εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν is used here only in Mark to explain John's baptism. Mark's stark and straightforward use indicates that he attaches no special interest to this phrase. In Matthew it is found in Jesus' words in the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt 26.28). Elsewhere, it is found in statements about Jesus' ability to forgive sin (ἀφίεναι ἁμαρτίας; Mk 2.10 and par). Luke consistently uses the phrase εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν in the context of Christology, to emphasise that forgiveness is usually associated with Jesus.¹⁶² In fact, the evidence suggests that the early Christians did not knowingly associate forgiveness with anything but belief in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore the description of John's baptism as 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin' may not be a Christian formulation, but one whose origin is pre-Christian.

Fifthly, the historical integrity of John's identification with the rite of baptism is borne out by the criterion of embarrassment or contradiction. This criterion

¹⁶¹ With reference to John's own disciples, see Lk 9.19-20; Acts 18.24; 19.3; with Jesus' disciples, see Mk 8.28 and par; Matt 17.13; Acts 1.22; 10.37; 19.4; with the ordinary people including 'sinners and outcasts', see Matt 11.7, 11-12; Lk 7.29; with the religious establishment, see Mk 11.30 and par; with Herod Antipas, see Mk 6.14 and par.

¹⁶² Lk 1.77; 24.27; Acts 3.38; 5.31; 10.43; 13.38; 26.18. See also Col 1.14; cf. Eph 1.7.

presupposes that the early Christian community would certainly have avoided acting in such a way, or creating such material that would have embarrassed it, or weakened its position in arguments with opponents. This means that anything that would create difficulty for the early Christian Church would naturally have been suppressed in the later stages of the Gospel tradition. A good example is the baptism of Jesus by JB. It is unlikely that the early Church would have created a story which could easily be misconstrued to imply that, by submitting himself to John's baptism, Jesus was subordinate to, or even a disciple of, John. It is therefore probable that John was given this title not by the Christian community, but by the Baptist movement itself or the Jewish circles in which he moved.¹⁶³

Sixthly, the Gospel tradition attests that John not only engaged in the rite of baptism, but also exhorted his compatriots to exhibit moral virtues in their lives (Q=Matt 3.7-10//Lk 3.7-9). According to the Gospels, John's baptism was an outward sign of the reality of repentance and the assurance of God's forgiveness (Mk 1.4; Lk 3.3 cf. Matt 3.2, 6, 11). John baptised the people only after they had confessed their sins with the intention of leading a righteous lifestyle (Q=Matt 3.7-9//Lk 3.7-9). In fact, those among his audience who were too set in their ways to repent were branded by John as 'a brood of vipers' (in Matthew, John addressed this diatribe specifically to the Pharisees and Sadducees). In contrast to these, were those who, according to Lk 3.10-14, were eager to follow John's ethical directives.

The Gospel account of John's role as a baptiser, who, in a characteristic prophetic style, called the people to repentance and to practise ethical behaviour, is corroborated by an independent account by Josephus:

But to some of the Jews it seemed that Herod's army had been destroyed by God, who was exacting vengeance (most certainly justly) as satisfaction for John who was called Baptist. For Herod indeed put him to death, who was a good man and one who commanded the Jews to practise virtue and act with justice toward one another and with piety toward God, and [so] to gather together by baptism. For [John's view was that] in this way baptism certainly would appear acceptable to him [i.e. God] if [they] used [it] not for seeking pardon of certain sins but purification of the body, because the soul had already been cleansed

¹⁶³ H. Lichtenberger, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and John the Baptist: Reflections on Josephus' Account of John the Baptist', in D. Dimant and U. Rappaport eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 340-46.

before by righteousness. And when others gather together [around John] (for they were also excited to the utmost by listening to [his] teachings), Herod, because he feared that his great persuasiveness with the people might lead to some kind of strife (for they seemed as if they would do everything which he counselled), thought it more preferable, before anything radically innovative happened as a result of him, to execute [John], taking action first, rather than when the upheaval happened to perceive too late, having already fallen into trouble. Because of the suspicion of Herod, he [i.e. John], after being sent bound to Machaerus (the fortress mentioned before), was executed there. But the opinion of the Jews [was] that the destruction of the army happened for vengeance of him [i.e. John] because God willed to afflict Herod.¹⁶⁴

The above description of John falls within the wider context of the defeat of Herod Antipas' army by Aretas IV, king of Nabatea. Herod's marriage to the daughter of Aretas had brought about a long period of peace and stability between Galilee and Nabatea. All this was soon to end as a result of Herod's love affair and intended marriage to Herodias, the wife of Herod's half-brother.¹⁶⁵ Herod's wife fled to her father, Aretas, with this news. Aretas was sorely displeased with Herod's treatment of his daughter. Soon border disputes erupted between the two regions, resulting in a full-blown war in which Herod's army was defeated. According to Josephus, Antipas' defeat was seen by the Jewish people as divine vengeance for his execution of John.

It is important to note that this passage, which displays no obvious Christian tendencies, is consistent with Josephus' usual style of presenting Judaism to his Greco-Roman readers. Its reliability is qualified by Josephus' well known biases, in particular his tendency to present Jewish ideas and practices in lofty philosophical terms in order to appeal to his readership, and his habit of avoiding any mention of Jewish eschatology. The passage is primarily concerned with political history and is devoid of any reference to Jesus and the early Christians. It is therefore unlikely to be a Christian interpolation.¹⁶⁶

The passage suggests that John was so popular during his time that the defeat of Antipas' army, which occurred in A.D. 35, a few years after the execution of John,

¹⁶⁴ *Ant.* 18.116-19. I have followed Webb's translation of the Greek text edited by Feldman, *Josephus* LCL, 9.80-84. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 31-41. For a detailed discussion of the passage, see H. W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* SNTSMS 17 (Cambridge: CUP, 1972), pp. 136-46; Hollenbach, 'Social Aspects'; H. Lichtenberger, 'Täufergemeinden und frühchristliche Täuferpolitik im letzten Drittel des 1. Jahrhunderts', *ZTK* 84 (1987), 36-57.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Mark 6.14-29 and par. The debate over the identity of this Herod is not particularly relevant for our discussion here.

¹⁶⁶ See §3.4.

was perceived by popular opinion to be linked to John's death. According to Josephus, John was a good man whose message included an exhortation to the Jews to lead righteous lives and to practise justice towards one another and piety towards God. It was only by doing this that their baptism would be efficacious.

Josephus further suggests that there was a ritual dimension to John's baptism. In John's view, his baptism was not a magic rite expected to bring about the remission of sins, but a rite symbolic of a spiritual reality which has already been effected. John's baptism only mediated a divine forgiveness brought about by righteous behaviour. Responding to John's call to a righteous lifestyle would result in pardon for sins – that is in the cleansing of the soul – while baptism would only consecrate the body.

The ethical content of John's message is not entirely new; the classical OT prophets had for a long time been proclaiming this message of righteous living, effective for the remission of sins in view of the coming judgment (Jer 5.1; 7.5-7; Amos 4.1-2). The new element here is the sealing of this righteous lifestyle with the rite of baptism. It may be that the ethical content of John's message, which was originally couched in categories reminiscent of the OT prophets, had here been presented in a way that would be familiar to Josephus' Greco-Roman audience.¹⁶⁷ It could also be that Josephus wanted to dissociate John from those mentioned in his writings, whom he sees as false, self-proclaimed prophets. Notice that while Josephus does not explicitly refer to John as a prophet, he is, nevertheless, aware of his prophetic status.

The impact of John's message on his audience is underlined by Josephus' description that the people were so aroused by his sermons that they were prepared to do everything which John asked them to do, a situation which alarmed Antipas (cf. Mk 1.5; Q=Lk 3.7-9//Matt 3.7-10; Lk 3.10-14). Despite the different perspectives in the accounts by both Josephus and the synoptic Gospels, the underlying motives for John's incarceration and execution by Antipas are similarly presented. According to Josephus, John was imprisoned because Antipas perceived him to be a political threat.

¹⁶⁷ Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, p. 254.

The synoptists, on the other hand, offer a moral reason for Antipas' action, because John had rebuked him for his unlawful marriage to Herodias, the wife of Philip, Antipas' brother (Mk 6.14-29 and par).¹⁶⁸ John's rebuke may be based on the Levitical law which prohibits marriage to one's brother's wife (Lev 18.16; 20.21). Placed within the context of John's preaching concerning the imminent judgment upon the impenitent, it appears that John's rebuke of Antipas would have had implications for his political credibility and control over the Jews. Thus, the synoptic account of John's decapitation is not in conflict with that of Josephus; both traditions actually supplement one another.

If the above analysis is correct, then it shows that John's continued ministry was a threat with socio-political consequences for Herod Antipas.¹⁶⁹ In fact, a Transjordanian wilderness location and a baptism in the Jordan would have nuances, explicitly or implicitly, of political subversion. The desert and Jordan, prophet and crowds, as noted above, signalled a danger in the Judean and Galilean countryside.

Thus both the Gospel tradition and Josephus underline John's baptising and prophetic ministry. In line with the classical prophets, John's prophetic message touched on the social, moral, ethical and political fabric of his society.

The conclusion becomes inevitable that there is a similarity between John's ethical preaching together with the administration of his baptismal rite, and the purificatory immersions practised at Qumran. Like the Essenes, John practised immersions. His message called for piety and purity. John believed that the acceptance of his 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' and the appropriation of his ethical preaching was the only way to escape the imminent judgment.

¹⁶⁸ Lk 3.19 does not name the brother. Josephus identifies Herodias' former husband as Herod, not Philip (*Ant.* 18.109). Philip was the husband of Herodias' daughter, Salome (*Ant.* 18.137). This brother-in-law of Herodias died in A.D. 34 (*Ant.* 18.106). The question of the identity of Antipas' brother is not relevant here. For further discussion, see Scobie, *John the Baptist*, p. 181; J. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20* WBC 35A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), pp. 429-33. But it is possible, as some have argued, that the Herod identified by Josephus may have also been called Philip. See Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, pp. 131-36; Guelich, *Mark 1-8.26*, p. 131.

¹⁶⁹ Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship* (1937-1980) (NY: de Gruyter, 1984), p. 675. For further discussion of the socio-political orientation of John's ministry, see Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 349-78.

Moreover, John's scathing denunciation of the religious authorities and the crowds who came for baptism without real need of repentance coheres with the Essenes' harsh criticism of the Jerusalem priesthood and those opposed to the ideals of the community. John chastises them for the presumption that without fulfilling its conditions, they could still hope to enjoy the blessings of the covenant established between God and their forebear Abraham the patriarch. It appears that John inherited the hatred of the Essenes for official Judaism.

Finally, it is worth noting that the lustral rite at Qumran and the baptismal activity of John were both practised in close proximity to each other, though John's activity was not limited to the southern part of the Jordan valley. The Jordan river was about 10 km away from Qumran, which perhaps would be too far for regular immersions, though it is possible that the sectaries would undertake this trip for an immersion of special significance.¹⁷⁰ John's ministry was also contemporaneous with the Essenes, though the latter antedates the former.

4.3.5 *The Eschatological Orientation of John*

Perhaps the major characteristic feature common to both JB and the Qumran sectaries, and many other Jews, is their fervent eschatological messianism. All four Gospels attest that John expected a superior, eschatological figure who would baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mk 1.7-8; Q=Matt 3.11//Lk 3.16; John 1.27; Acts 13.25).¹⁷¹ John's baptism was, therefore, eminently eschatological and messianic, as well as being vitally connected to himself.¹⁷² Bultmann may be right in suggesting that John's baptism was also an eschatological baptismal sacrament, in the sense that any one who engaged in it 'would be purified for the coming kingdom of God and would belong to those who would escape the wrath and judgment of God'.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, p. 139, n. 23; Badia, *Qumran Baptism*, p. 49. Cf. Scobie, *John the Baptist*, p. 106.

¹⁷¹ See chapter 8 below.

¹⁷² R. Schütz, *Johannes der Täufer* (Zürich/Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1967), p. 43.

¹⁷³ Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* trans L. P. Smith and E. Huntress (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1935), p. 26.

Similarly, the Qumran sectaries looked forward to the imminent appearance of the prophet, the interpreter, the Son of God, the messiahs of Aaron and Israel at the end of time. The arrival of these messianic figures serves to mark the end of an era during which certain laws prevailed and the beginning of the eschatological moment.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, the use of Isa 40.3 suggests that they were also awaiting the imminent arrival of God or his special agent.

We may also include under the present heading the work of the Spirit 'of Holiness', which was at Qumran both a present reality and an eschatological hope. For example, in accordance with their emphasis on divine initiative, the sectaries expressed the conviction that they had already received the Holy Spirit of God, which enabled them to act in humble obedience and knowledge of God's will:

It is Thou who didst shape the spirit
and establish its work [from the beginning];
the way of all the living proceeds from Thee (1QH 15.22).

I will seek [Thy] spirit [of knowledge];
cleaving to Thy spirit of [holiness]
Behold, Thou art pleased to favour [Thy servant],
and hast graced me with Thy spirit of mercy
and [with the radiance] of Thy glory.
Thine, Thine is righteousness,
for it is Thou who hast done all [these things]!

And I know that man is not righteous
except through Thee,
and therefore I implore Thee
by the spirit which Thou has given [me]
to perfect Thy [favours] to Thy servant [for ever],
purifying me by Thy Holy Spirit,
and drawing me near to Thee by Thy grace
according to the abundance of Thy mercies (1QH 16.2, 9, 12).

In the above passage the sectaries expressed thanks to God for having elected them into the community and purified them by his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was supposed to effect the inner conversion and bring about regeneration:

He shall be cleansed from all his sins by the spirit of holiness uniting him to His truth, and his iniquity shall be expiated by the spirit of uprightness and humility. And when his flesh is sprinkled with purifying water and sanctified by cleansing

¹⁷⁴ 4Q174; CD 12.23; 14.19; 19.10; 1QS 9.9b-11. M. A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* CCWJCW 2 (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), p. 138. For further discussion, see J. VanderKam, 'Messianism in the Scrolls', in E. Ulrich and J. VanderKam eds., *The Community of the Renewed Covenant: The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 211-234; §5.6.

water, it shall be made clean by the humble submission of his soul to all the precepts of God (1QS 3.7-8a).

He will cleanse him of all wicked deeds with the spirit of holiness; like purifying waters He will shed upon him the spirit of truth (to cleanse him) of all abomination and falsehood. And he shall be plunged into the purification that he may instruct the upright in the knowledge of the Most High and teach the wisdom of the sons of heaven to the perfect way (1QS 4.21-22).

At the same time, in 1QH 3.28-36 there is reference to the eschatological retribution by fire, using language drawn from the OT (Isa 34.9; Amos 7.4; cf. Ps 21.9; 83.14-15; Isa 9.18-19; 10.16-17; 66.24; Jer 21.14; Dan 7.9-10; Zeph 1.18).

It is significant to note in the above passages (esp. 1QS 3.7-8; 4.21-22) the use of language which is also characteristic of John's preaching—cleansing, water, the Holy Spirit and retribution by fire. There is a strong affinity between John and the sectaries in terms of their eschatological outlook and the purifying activity of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁵ Both were conscious of living in the expectation of the imminent end of the world, leading to the dawn of a new age. Both indicated that the waters of cleansing were not efficacious to cleanse men of sin, unless preceded by inward repentance and a willingness to receive God's forgiveness. Furthermore, the Essenes' concept of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about an inner conversion and regeneration is almost identical to that of John in the Gospel accounts. Like the Essenes, John spoke of a superior figure who would baptise with 'a Holy Spirit'.¹⁷⁶

What is noteworthy in the foregoing discussion is the concern common to both John and Qumran to prepare their converts and members respectively for the eschatological intervention of God.

4.3.6 *Asceticism and Celibacy*

John is portrayed as an ascetic prophet who fed on locusts and wild honey. The fact that he roamed up and down the Jordan valley and the Judean wilderness, apparently with no fixed abode, proclaiming his message of the imminent arrival of the 'coming figure', makes it probable that he was a celibate (Mk 1.5-8 and par). It is

¹⁷⁵ H. W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung und gegenwärtiges Heil: Untersuchungen zu den Gemeindeliedern von Qumran* SUNT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966, pp. 136-39.

¹⁷⁶ §8.5.

again interesting to note that in his fiery message of the imminent judgment on Israel, John stresses that the Jews should not pride themselves in their blood ties and descent from Abraham. This false sense of security could not save them (Q=Matt 3.7-10// Lk 3.7-9). Notice how this Q tradition fits in with what Luke indirectly suggests. John did not follow in the vocation of his father as a priest in the Jerusalem temple. He also did not seem to continue that priestly line by marriage and progeny. It was therefore not surprising that when John dropped out of the scene of action by his imprisonment and subsequent execution at the hands of Antipas, it was his disciples who came to collect his corpse for burial (Mk 6.14-29 and par).

It must be conceded that the Essenes were not the only celibate group during the time of JB.¹⁷⁷ Philo mentions the Egyptian Therapeutae as another marginal Jewish group, probably another order of the Essenes, which held to this practice.¹⁷⁸ There were also certain anchorite hermits who roamed the Palestinian countryside and attracted disciples. For example, Josephus describes his three-year experience of following one Bannus, who performed ablutions day and night for the sake of purity.¹⁷⁹ Therefore the possibility must be left open that John could have associated with any of these groups or individuals. Nevertheless, our knowledge of such contemporary Jewish groups – in contrast to that of the Essenes – is not sufficiently advanced to enable us to make intelligent comparisons.

Thus, it is reasonable to propose that John spent some part of his formative years with the Essenes, and was influenced considerably by the Qumran community, where celibacy was practised.

4.4 Limitations

There are limitations to the above correspondences. (i) John is nowhere mentioned in the DSS that have been published so far, neither is he referred to as an

¹⁷⁷ For discussion on Essene celibacy, see §7.6.1.

¹⁷⁸ Philo devotes his treatise, *On the Contemplative life (De Vita Contemplativa)* to this sect. See M. Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus* trans J. H. Farley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 120-30.

¹⁷⁹ *Life* 11-12.

Essene in either the NT or in Josephus. The absence of such a reference is particularly significant in Josephus who makes mention of individual Essenes, such as 'Judas the Essene' and 'John the Essene', in his discussion of the sect (e.g. *War* 1.78-81; 2.567).

(ii) The immersions of Qumran, and the ablutions referred to above, occurred on a daily basis. There is no equivalent to what appears to be a single 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' as preached by John. It has been observed above that the repeated ritual washings of the Essenes were intended to achieve Levitical purity for all members of the community prior to the partaking of the communal meal.¹⁸⁰ The community was thus clearly interested in the rites of moral purification, whereas John welcomed all Jews, both the clean and the unclean, without any rigorous preparation or probation. John's only requirement was the individual's awareness of the need of repentance (Q=Matt 3.7-10//Lk 3.7-9; Lk 3.10-14). The idea of an existing 'righteous remnant' does not come into the equation here. John called the whole nation to undergo a conversionary experience through his rite of baptism, a rite which was performed in the full glare of his audience (Mk 1.4 and par).

(iii) There appear to have been a number of pious groups which practised baptism in Palestine and Syria during the second temple period. We have noted Josephus' reference to Bannus, the hermit, who used ablutions of cold water daily for the sake of purity (*Life* 11-12). There are also the OT ablutions which included immersions or bathing of the entire body (Lev 14-17, 22).¹⁸¹ It appears that the use of ablutions was, therefore, not unique to the Qumran community, and John could have acquired his baptising activity through any of these groups.

(iv) His baptism does not appear to be self-administered as may have been the practice at Qumran. The evidence suggests that John's baptism was probably administered by him, and in public.

(v) John's baptism was unique in the sense that it was in preparation for a future superior baptism to be administered by a figure greater than he.

¹⁸⁰ 1QS 5.7-15.

¹⁸¹ For further discussion, see Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 95-108.

(vi) It is argued that John's baptism did not betoken admission into a strictly organised community, since he did not intend to found a religious brotherhood like Qumran.¹⁸²

A close look at the above objections may reveal that they are not as significant as they appear to be, and should, therefore, not be allowed to cloud the possible lines of correspondences and parallels with Qumran.

(i) As far as reference to the Essenes is concerned, the DSS hardly mention any individual Essenes by name. There is also no explicit mention of the Essenes in the NT. Josephus might well not have described John as an Essene, because he was no longer an Essene when he became famous: he was a breakaway. Furthermore, while Josephus refers to only a few individual Essenes, he does write at length about Essene prophets, distinguishing them from the pseudoprophets and impostors who deceived the people. Josephus compares these Essene prophets with the classical prophets of the OT, who 'appeared suddenly, standing up to kings, criticising their conduct or foretelling their downfall' (*War* 1.78-81; 2.112-13; *Ant* 15.371-79).¹⁸³ This is precisely how Josephus describes JB (*Ant* 18.116-119). The absence of any explicit reference to John as an Essene does not necessarily indicate that he could not have been one. As indicated above, Josephus was more interested in John's baptising and prophetic activities in the context of the political events of Galilee.

(ii) Regarding the notion that John's baptism was unrepeatable, it may be pointed out here that while the Gospels are clear that John baptised, they are ambiguous about whether it was a repeated rite or not. First, we have argued above that if John's baptism was not a repeated rite, it is possible that he may have derived this practice from the Qumran immersions at the end of the postulant's novitiate (1QS 6.14-23). At this point, the immersion may have assumed a special meaning hitherto not experienced by the novice, marking the end of his rite of passage into full membership in the community.

¹⁸² Sutcliffe, 'Baptism and Baptismal Rites at Qumran', 179-88; H. H. Rowley, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and their Significance* new edn. (London: Independent Press, 1964), pp. 15-16.

¹⁸³ O. Betz, 'Was John the Baptist an Essene?' in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* pp. 205-14.

Secondly, the one-off nature of John's baptism may also be explained by the social context of both John's audience and the style of his own ministry. John's rite was performed on those who had travelled to hear or see him. After receiving John's baptism, many of them returned to their homes and vocations, whereas the Qumran immersions took place among its members. John's brief ministry and premature death meant that there was not much time for him to develop his ideas concerning the shape and structure of his movement, in contrast to the developed and elaborate structure and procedures of his supposed former community. This probably explains the formal and private nature of the Qumran washings, in contrast to the public nature of John's baptism.¹⁸⁴

Furthermore, J. A. T. Robinson has rightly observed that the idea of John's baptism being unrepeatable is a theological emphasis which, as the letter to the Hebrews (6.4-8) makes clear, derives from the uniqueness of the Christ-event into which Christian baptism has been incorporated. He argues that prior to the idea of a once and for all revelation, which is also connected to the Christ-event, it is virtually impossible to find evidence anywhere of any kind of emphasis on the 'unrepeatability of baptism'. There is also no suggestion that John's baptism was of this exclusive nature.¹⁸⁵

It is not clear if the early Church's abandonment of the regular Jewish ablutions with its food laws and sacrifices partly explains why John's baptism was perceived as a one off event. This situation, perhaps, goes back to Jesus himself, who, in his manifest disavowal of external washings, questions their religious efficacy (Mk 7.1-15; Matt 15.1-11). It seems that the editorial comment in Mark 7.3-5 is meant to contrast the early Christian movement with the constant ritual washings (βαπτισμοί) of the Jews, an activity which is comparable to that practised at Qumran:

—οἱ γὰρ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ πάντες οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐὰν μὴ πύγμῃ
νίψωνται τὰς χεῖρας οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν, κρατοῦντες τὴν παράδοσιν
τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, καὶ ἀπ' ἀγορᾶς ἐὰν μὴ βαπτίσωνται οὐκ

¹⁸⁴ F. M. Cross, *Library of Qumran*, pp. 67 (note 23), 234.

¹⁸⁵ J. A. T. Robinson, 'The Baptism of John', pp. 175-91.

ἐσθίουσιν, καὶ ἄλλα πολλά ἐστὶν ἃ παρέλαβον κρατεῖν, βαπτισμοὺς ποτηρίων καὶ ξεστῶν καὶ χαλκίων [καὶ κλινῶν]—καὶ ἐπερωτῶσιν αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς, Διὰ τί οὐ περιπατοῦσιν οἱ μαθηταί σου κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, ἀλλὰ κοιναῖς χερσὶν ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον;

Again, in the matter of fasting (Mk 2.18 and par), the disciples of John behaved like the rest of the Jews, comparably close to the Pharisees. In the fourth Gospel, the disciples of John are so close to mainstream Judaism in matters of ceremonial washings that there seems to be some kind of dispute in this area between them and the disciples of Jesus (John 3.25-26). It may be therefore that John's baptism was repeatable, or combined with other washings, in line with mainstream Judaism.

As far as the argument that John may not have subjected his candidates to any rigorous preparation and probation is concerned, it is relevant to recall the impression from the Gospel accounts that he instructed them before immersing them in the Jordan. Both John and the Essenes emphasised that baptism was not a momentary act, or a superficial ceremony, but an activity which should lead to a permanent conversionary experience in the candidate's inward and moral attitudes.

(iii) With regard to the other smaller pious groups which also practised baptism, there is scanty evidence to suggest that they antedate Essenism.¹⁸⁶ Even though most of them observed a baptism of initiation reminiscent of Qumran, these were Jewish-Christian groups often influenced in various ways by Gnosticism. Furthermore, there is scanty evidence to suggest that John's baptism was influenced by the Jewish-proselyte baptisms of the first century A.D. The discovery of the DSS has enhanced our knowledge about the Essene ideologies and praxis; this evidence suggests a stronger affinity between John's baptism and the Qumran immersions than the practice of any of the well known contemporary Jewish groups.

¹⁸⁶ This has been one of the flaws of Teicher's theory which seeks to maintain a connection between the Essenes and the Ebionites. J. L. Teicher, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls—Documents of the Jewish-Christian Sect of the Ebionites', *JJS* 3 (1951), 67-99. See Fitzmyer, 'The Qumran Scrolls, the Ebionites, and Their Literature', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 208-31; Bo Reicke, 'The Historical Setting of John's Baptism' in E. P. Sanders ed., *Jesus and the Gospels, and the Church* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), pp. 209-24.

(iv) The administration of baptism by John himself may have been a modification, or, indeed, an innovation of the self-administered practice of Qumran. Rather than introducing any radical change, this was to give emphasis to an adapted rite which became inextricably connected with him, giving rise to the appellation the 'Baptiser/Baptist'. Furthermore, if John also saw himself as the Elijah figure or as personally 'preparing the way of the Lord', this would explain his personal involvement. While there is no evidence to suggest that John did not preach to non-Jews, it is likely the majority of his audience were Jews. His reference to the Abrahamic covenant would be intelligible only to Jews.

(v) If John's baptising and prophetic ministry was preparatory in nature, so, too, was the Essenes' entire ministry with all its rituals. As explained above, apart from the emphasis on repentance and the dawning of a new age, John's eschatological orientation and belief in the imminent judgment of all Israel parallel that of Qumran. Both referred to the regenerating and purifying influence of the Holy Spirit, as well as anticipating eschatological messianic figures.¹⁸⁷

(vi) In conceding that John's baptism did not signify an admission into an organised community like Qumran, we must be careful not to exaggerate this difference. It has been suggested by some that John's mission was essentially ecclesial. In fact, the Gospel evidence seems to imply that there was a missionary and prophetic character about his ministry.¹⁸⁸ Before baptising the people, John called them to adopt an ethical lifestyle different from that of the unrepentant, in preparation for the coming messianic figure. Some of those who accepted his baptism became members of his group. These members are referred to as John's disciples (Mk 2.18; Matt 11.2; 14.12; John 1.35-42; Acts 18.24-19.7).

If the hypothesis of John's connection with Qumran is correct, it does fill a crucial blank in his life. It also helps to put in perspective his future ministry, as outlined below. Thus while he is no longer part of the Qumran community at the time we meet him in the Gospels, it is quite likely that he was connected with them at an

¹⁸⁷ See further §4.4 and chapter 7.

¹⁸⁸ Rowley, *Scrolls and their Significance*, p. 15; Wink, *John the Baptist*.

earlier point of his life. In fact, John's Essenic leanings had been alluded to as far back as the beginning of this century by I. Abrahams, who contends that it is quite untenable to attempt to dissociate John from Essenism. Endorsing an earlier study by Graetz, Abrahams makes an interesting but unsubstantiated claim that the only difference between JB and the Essenes is that he made a more effective and wider appeal than the sectaries by relaxing some of the Essenian stringency, such as their communism, their residence in colonies and their asceticism.¹⁸⁹

Our conclusion that John grew up at Qumran confirms earlier independent studies on the DSS and the NT, some of which have been referred to above. For example, R. E. Brown concludes that almost every detail of the life and teaching of JB has an affinity with some aspect of the teaching and praxis of the Qumran community. He postulates that prior to his contact with Jesus, John was either at Qumran where he had been brought up or with other Essenes, or further still was the head of a quasi-Essene group. Brown continues, 'if this hypothesis is true, and if John the Evangelist was his disciple, we can explain very well the Qumran impact on the Fourth Gospel'.¹⁹⁰ That John was raised by the covenanters of Qumran remains a plausible suggestion in light of the above evaluation of the evidence.

4.5 Conclusion

In view of the above converging lines of evidence, we may conclude that the belief and praxis of the Qumran community afford the closest known parallel to John's baptism. This closeness may also be explained by the possibility that, after his birth to an elderly priestly couple, John spent the formative years of his life, as well as his youth, with the Qumran community. The foregoing discussion has shown the remarkable affinity between John and the Qumran community: both were profoundly attached to the wilderness – both appealing to Isa 40.3 to explain their retreat into the

¹⁸⁹ Abrahams, *Studies*, pp. 30-35.

¹⁹⁰ R. E. Brown, 'The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 183-207. See also Betz, 'Was John the Baptist an Essene?' in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 205-14.

wilderness; both practised baptism and called for repentance and an ethical lifestyle; both were eschatologically orientated, with fervent eschatological messianism; both castigated the temple aristocracy in Jerusalem; and both practised asceticism and celibacy. These parallels point to a possible connection between John and the Essenes. The differences noted above – mostly of emphasis rather than actual divergence – are not serious enough to argue against the striking correspondences between John and the Qumran Essenes. These similarities may be reasonably explained by postulating that John acquired his ideas during the formative years at Qumran.

John may have been a member of the community prior to receiving his call to be a prophet. We may recall here the experience of Jeremiah who, as the son of a priest, received a similar call to be a prophet (Jer 1.1-2). Thus, when we encounter John in the Gospels and in the other sources, he is no longer a member of the community, but an oracular popular prophet proclaiming a rite of purification to his countrymen in view of the imminence of the coming judgment.

It is simply not enough merely to suggest that John had contacts with Qumran, without stating what sort of contacts these were. This study leads us to the conclusion that there is no reason to be sceptical or reluctant to believe that John had been a member of the Essene community prior to the commencement of his public ministry.

5. THE STRUCTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE ESSENES AND THE EARLY CHURCH

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter we examined the hypothesis of John's connection with the Essenes at Qumran prior to the commencement of his public prophetic and baptising ministry. In this and the two subsequent chapters we shall investigate possible influences the Essenes had on the early Church as a potentially fruitful means of shedding light upon the relationship between John and Jesus.¹⁹¹ We shall take a close look at a number of claims that have been made by some scholars (both experts and amateurs), and test them against the evidence from both the classical sources, the DSS and the NT.

The current scholarly debate on the relationship between the Essenes and early Christianity proposes three possible ways of relating these two groups: 1. The Qumran community and Palestinian Christianity are identical, the community being the Church and Jesus the Teacher of Righteousness; 2. Christianity is an off-shoot of Essenism; and 3. Both Essenism and Christianity spring from the same common stock of the Judaism of the second temple period.¹⁹²

1. According to the first theory, the origin of the Qumran community dates to the period when Palestine came under the rule of the Romans – more precisely from the beginning of the first century A.D., which marked the beginning of the unpopular Herodian dynasty. This period also witnessed the rise of a number of groups within Judaism, including the Baptist group and the Zealots.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ We are aware that early Christianity was a pluriform unity consisting of many strands. For example, we can talk of the Pauline, Marcan, Lucan, Matthean, and Johannine communities or expressions of Christianity. However, for the purposes of this thesis this distinction is not particularly necessary. Our primary concern here is to look at the early Church in its totality and the possible influences of the Essenes on this entity.

¹⁹² Vermes, *Qumran in Perspective*, pp. 211-21.

¹⁹³ Driver's theory in which he associates the Qumran community with the Zealots, has been criticised not only on the grounds that the agenda pursued by the sectaries and the Zealots are diametrically opposed to each other, but also that he fails to take into account the archaeological and

One version of the above theory identifies the Qumran protagonist and antagonist with leading figures of the early Church. For example, J. L. Teicher has conjectured that the DSS were composed by the Ebionites, a Jewish-Christian sect, rather than the Essenes. According to Teicher, these Jewish-Christians identified the Teacher of Righteous with Jesus, and the wicked priest with Paul.¹⁹⁴ This suggestion has not convinced other scholars, who (among other things) have noted a number of fundamental differences between the Ebionites and the early Church and have found Ebionism to be a deviation from the primitive Jesus movement.¹⁹⁵ The Ebionite hypothesis in any case founders in the light of both archaeological and palaeographical evidence, which bring the critical years of the formation and organisation of the Qumran community into the pre-Christian period.¹⁹⁶

Another version of the theory has been proposed by Barbara Thiering, who links Qumran with the group that returned to Qumran after the earthquake of 31 B.C. and with the primitive Christian community. She, too, rejects the prevailing consensus which assumes a pre-Christian matrix for the Essene movement. Rather, she identifies John as the Teacher of Righteousness, and Jesus as the wicked priest.¹⁹⁷

This sort of reconstruction – identifying the Qumran community with the early Christian movement – is out of the question. The two ideologies are fundamentally different. For example, the emphasis on the punctilious observance of the Mosaic law and the sectarian nature of the Qumran Essenism is completely at variance with the

palaeographical evidence which date the origin of the community to the second century B.C. Perhaps it is worth noting here that if the Essenes do have some connection with the Zealots, as is sometimes maintained, then Jesus must have heard of them, and may have been quite aware of their manner of life and agenda from Simon 'the Cananaean' or 'Zealot', who became one of Jesus' disciples (Mk 3.18; Matt 10.4; Lk 6.15; Acts 1.13). Driver, *Judaean Scrolls*, pp. 37-51. For a criticism of his theory, see Albright & Mann, 'Qumran and the Essenes: Geography, Chronology, and Identification of the Sect', in *The Scrolls and Christianity*, pp. 11-25.

¹⁹⁴ Teicher, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls—Documents of the Jewish-Christian Sect of the Ebionites', *JJS* 3 (1951), 67-99.

¹⁹⁵ W. W. Wessel, 'Ebionites; Ebionism', *ISBE* 2:9-10; Fitzmyer, 'The Qumran Scrolls, the Ebionites, and Their Literature', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 208-31; F. F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Paternoster, 1956), pp. 125-26.

¹⁹⁶ Rowley, *Scrolls and their Significance*, pp. 15-24.

¹⁹⁷ B. Thiering, 'Once More the Wicked Priest', *JBL* 97 (1978), 191-205; —*Redating the Teacher of Righteousness* ANZSTR (Sidney: Theological Explorations, 1979); —*The Gospels and Qumran: A New Hypothesis* ANZSTR (Sidney: Theological Explorations, 1981). For a criticism of Thiering's work, see Betz & Riesner, *Jesus*, pp. 99-113; N. T. Wright, *Who Was Jesus?* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 19-36.

openness of the early Church. Moreover, no credible NT documents have been discovered in any of the caves to date.

2. With regard to the second approach, which sees Christianity as an offshoot of Essenism, we are reminded by A. Dupont-Sommer of Renan's famous dictum that Christianity is 'an Essenism' which has largely succeeded, though Renan was hesitant to affirm a direct connection between Essenism and Christianity. Dupont-Sommer further proposes that the Teacher of Righteousness anticipated the teaching, passion and messianic claims of Jesus, and that the Qumran community was an adumbration of the early Church.¹⁹⁸

Similarly, J. Allegro claims that the Teacher of Righteousness, persecuted and crucified by Alexander Jannaeus, was expected by his disciples to be resurrected and reappear in the community a second time. Allegro suggests that the early Church's eschatological expectations of Jesus were similar to those of the Qumran model.¹⁹⁹

R. Eisenman has also posited that the authors of the DSS were from a Zadokite movement – of which the Qumran community was a part – that existed for many centuries and continued into the first century A.D. to become a distinct group. This movement claimed such notable members as: Ezra, Judas Maccabee, JB, Jesus and his brother, James.²⁰⁰ Recently Eisenman and Wise have further suggested that the DSS are documents with Judaeo-Christian overtones.²⁰¹

Furthermore, it has been suggested by D. Flusser that the term 'sons of light' (Lk 16.8), which occurs in the synoptics only in the parable of the Unjust Steward (Lk 16.1-13), was a favourite Essene self-designation.²⁰² Later, this Essene appellation

¹⁹⁸ A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Preliminary Survey* trans E. M. Rowley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), p. 99. The above views were slightly modified in his second volume, *Jewish Sect*, pp. 147-66, though he still maintained the significant influence of the Essenes on nascent Christianity.

¹⁹⁹ This was, however, refuted by five other members of the team working with Allegro on the Scrolls who claimed that he had misread the texts (in 'Radio Times' of 16 March, 1956, p. 11). For a general survey of Allegro's views, see his *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 94-165. See also M. Baigent & R. Leigh, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), pp. 45-51; J. van der Ploeg, *The Excavations at Qumran: A Survey of the Judaeo-Christian Brotherhood and its Ideas* trans K. Smyth (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1958), pp. 190-91.

²⁰⁰ R. Eisenman, *Maccabees, Zadokites, Christians and Qumran: A New Hypothesis of Qumran Origins* Studia Post-Biblica 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1983).

²⁰¹ Eisenman & Wise, *Scrolls Uncovered*, pp. 1-16.

²⁰² D. Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 150-68; §5.5.

was transferred to the early Christians. In this parable Jesus is seen to repudiate the Essene separatism and warns his followers against such behaviour. Flusser further suggests that when the primitive Church in Jerusalem became a more identifiable group, the practice of common ownership of property there became more distinct, possibly under Essene influence. Moreover, John breached Essene separatism and complete economic communism by his open air preaching and baptising ministry.²⁰³

In addition to such experts in the field, other interested observers outside the discipline have also proposed theories for the Essene origins of Christianity. E. Wilson, the literary critic, hazards the suggestion that the Qumran community 'is perhaps more than Bethlehem or Nazareth, the cradle of Christianity'.²⁰⁴ According to Wilson, the relation of the Qumran sectaries to Jesus and the early Church may be seen as 'the successive phases of a movement'.²⁰⁵

3. The third approach presupposes that Qumran and Christianity represent two independent movements of Jewish heritage in the pursuit of similar ideals. This is the view favoured by Vermes, who seeks to demonstrate it by an examination of some of the distinctive ideas common to the two communities.²⁰⁶

There is probably some truth in both the second and third views. It seems reasonable to argue that if Essenism antedates Christianity, as now seems to be the prevailing scholarly consensus, the latter may well have absorbed some of the ideas and motifs of the former. Here M. Black's study on the Essenes and Christian origins offers a more positive approach than Vermes. He argues for an Essene influence on early Christianity, provided Essenism is not limited exclusively to the Dead Sea group, but understood as a general term describing a widespread movement. However, he cautions that while a general historical connection is possible, 'we have still to assess the extent of the influence of this non-conformist Essene-type Judaism on Christianity; and, even more important, we have still to form a judgment about what is original, over

²⁰³ See §7.3.

²⁰⁴ E. Wilson, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (London: W. H. Allen, 1955), p. 129.

²⁰⁵ Wilson, *Scrolls*, p. 126.

²⁰⁶ Vermes, *Qumran in Perspective*, pp. 212-221.

against what is derivative, in the Christian religion of which Essenism represents, as it were, the larval stage'.²⁰⁷

If such a close connection is perceived between Qumran and the early Church, it is curious that the Essenes are not explicitly mentioned in the NT. However, it has been suggested that the lack of reference to them may be partially explained by the affinity between the two communities. Unlike the strained relations that existed between the early Church and some of the major parties in Judaism, evident in a number of polemical passages of the NT, the early Church had no such antipathetic feeling towards the Essenes, though some posit that a few polemical passages in the NT may refer to the Essenes (e.g. the polemics of Col 2.16-23 may be directed against the Essenes' obsession with laws of purity relating to food and drink, calendrical matters, worship of angels and visions).²⁰⁸

The insightful study of a number of significant links between the Essenes and the early Church by the above scholars and the publication of a number of new Qumran documents, call for a re-appraisal of the variegated views so far expressed on the question of the relationship between the Essenes and the early Church.

We now take a closer look at some of the common theological ideas and practices shared by both the Essenes and the primitive Church.²⁰⁹ We are aware of the frequent objection that a mere list of parallels may not prove much. Even if a particular idea is shared between the Essenes and the early Church, this does not in itself show what sort of connection there is between them. There is also the danger of 'parallelomania', a tendency to see striking significance in parallel or similar phraseology in two different sources which may either be entirely coincidental with no relevance at all, or may derive from a shared Jewish heritage.²¹⁰

The above problems might be enough to prevent us from pursuing this study. It should, however, be noted that parallels and similarities may be meaningful in

²⁰⁷ M. Black, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins', in *Scrolls and Christianity*, pp. 97- 106.

²⁰⁸ F. M. Cross, *Library of Qumran*, p. 201, note 6.

²⁰⁹ For a general introduction into the life of the sectaries in relation to the early Church, see Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible: With Special Attention to the Book of Isaiah* (NY: OUP, 1964), esp. pp. 110-51; Allegro, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 101-40.

²¹⁰ S. Sandmel, 'Parallelomania', *JBL* 81 (1962), 1-13.

determining relationships, depending on the integrity of each parallel within its context. Parallels may prove illuminating depending on the ethos and time, and may in some cases even indicate the historical lines along which ideas, concepts and institutions are transmitted from one group to another. In this respect, such an approach is indeed worthwhile in helping us explore the possible connection between the Essenes and the early Church.

5.2 The Geographical Proximity of the Essene and Early Christian Communities in Jerusalem

It is sometimes argued that when the Qumran sect and the primitive Christian community began to function, they were found in quite different localities. While the Qumran community was found in the wilderness at the northwestern section of the Dead Sea, the Christian congregations, on the other hand, were found in large cities, first in Jerusalem and then, as their missionary thrust gained momentum, in Samaria, the coastal towns in Palestine, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome.

However, we have noted from the classical sources that the Essenes were not confined to Qumran nor to one particular city, but lived in both towns (πόλεις) and villages (κώμας) throughout Judea.²¹¹

Pixner has argued persuasively, using a good deal of both literary and archaeological evidence, for an organised Essene quarter in Jerusalem, for which Mount Zion is the most plausible location.²¹² According to Pixner, the location of the biblical Zion corresponds to the hill where today the Dormition Church, the successor to the Crusader Basilica Santa Maria in Sion, and the even more imposing Hagia Sion of the Byzantines are situated. In close proximity is the compound of Nebi Daub which houses the Cenacle (Upper Room) and the so-called 'Tomb of David'. This locale is

²¹¹ *Hypothetica* 11.1; *Quod Omnis* 76. Though Philo seems to contradict himself about the Essenes' attitude towards the cities, the point is clear that they were definitely not confined to Qumran. See also *War* 2.124.

²¹² Pixner, 'An Essene Quarter?' 245-84; — *Wege des Messias und Stätten der Urkirche: Jesus und das Judenchristentum im Licht neuer archäologischer Erkenntnisse* ed. Riesner SBAZ 2 (Basel/Giessen: Brunnen, 1991), pp. 180-207.

generally considered by Christians to be the cradle of the early Church, the seat of the first Jewish believers in Jesus as the messiah. Pixner posits that Christians were not the first group to have used Mount Zion as the centre of their activities. Before them were the Essenes, who are mentioned in connection with the Essene Gate (τὴν Ἑσσηνῶν πύλην) in Josephus' description of the First (Western) Wall of Jerusalem.²¹³

Furthermore, Dalman, the eminent German topographer, suggests that the Essene Gate was used by the Essenes as an entrance into Jerusalem from their habitations in the desert.²¹⁴ According to the *Letter of Aristeas*, certain paths and steps were used exclusively by individuals who were 'involved in purification rites, so as not to touch any forbidden object'.²¹⁵ Pixner suggests that this remark may refer especially to the Essenes who were very concerned to remain in a special state of purity at all times.²¹⁶

There is further evidence to suggest an Essene community in Jerusalem:

(i) One of the earliest references to the Essenes by Josephus is in connection with the story of Judas the Essene, who is reported to have predicted the assassination of Antigonus I by his brother Aristobulus I in 104 B.C. Josephus suggests that Judas the Essene had organised a sort of school in Jerusalem, where he instructed disciples in the Essene way of life (*War* 1.78-81; *Ant* 13.311-13). Another Essene prophet, Manaëmus, is said to have predicted that Herod would be king when he grew up (*Ant* 15.373-9).²¹⁷

(ii) The Qumran monastery was abandoned for nearly 30 years after an earthquake, possibly one that is dated around 31 B.C. It can reasonably be assumed that during that period a good number of the members of Qumran transferred their residence to Jerusalem, since with the rise to power of Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.) the political and religious influence of the Hasmonean priesthood, their antagonists, was waning. There is evidence that the Essenes were highly esteemed by Herod, who

²¹³ *War* 5.145.

²¹⁴ G. Dalman, *Jerusalem und sein Gelände* (Gutersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelmann, 1930), p. 86f.

²¹⁵ *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates* 106 (*OTP* 2.7-34, esp. p. 20).

²¹⁶ See §4.3.4.

²¹⁷ See also *Ant* 17.346-48.

exempted them from a special oath of loyalty and gave them privileges denied to other religious parties.²¹⁸

(iii) Furthermore, CD forbids its recipients to have sexual relations in Jerusalem (12.1). The *Apostrophe to Zion* (a hymn discovered at Qumran), shows an intense love of the sectaries for Zion.²¹⁹ It portrays an ideal city, full of expectancy for its salvation and purification. If the *Hasidim* mentioned in these hymns are the Essenes living in Jerusalem, they must have considered themselves, in their special state of purity, as a blessing, source of hope and glory for Zion.

Besides the above literary indications, Pixner further argues, using archaeological evidence, that the baths found in the proximity to the Essene Gate offered the Essenes the opportunity to fulfil the *halakhic* prescription (cf. Deut 23.10) by washing and slipping back into the city after sunset.²²⁰ Further evidence also comes from the *Temple Scroll* (11QT) with its collection of *halakhot* about ritual uncleanness of the temple and its city, as well as other habitations in the land of Israel.²²¹

The Essene presence in Jerusalem is again attested by the *Copper Scroll* (3Q15), which, in addition to describing the hiding places of certain valuables in Jerusalem and other districts of Palestine, also furnishes us with further topographical information regarding the Essene Gate in Jerusalem.²²²

Drawing on the literary and archaeological evidence, Pixner attempts to establish a possible interchange between the Essenes and the primitive Church. First he notes the closeness of the Essene Gate to Mount Zion as the location of the Essene quarter in Jerusalem. The primitive Church also claims to have had its origin on Mount Zion. He

²¹⁸ *Ant* 15.371-72, 78-79; *Quod Omnis* 89-91. For counter arguments to the question of possible congenial relationship between the Qumran sectaries and Herod, and the destruction of the community by an earthquake around 31 B.C., see Baigent and Leigh, *Deception*, pp. 153-55.

²¹⁹ *Apostrophe to Zion* in J. A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1967), pp. 123-27; *DJD*, IV, pp. 43, 85-87.

²²⁰ Immersion baths were common in Jerusalem, particularly near the Temple site. They were common among the Jews.

²²¹ The *Temple Scroll* (11QT), esp. columns XLVI-LI (Vermes, *DSSE*, pp. 144-47); Brooke, 'The Temple Scroll and the Archaeology of Qumran, 'Ain Feshkha and Masada', *RQ* 13 (1988), 225-37.

²²² For a discussion of the controversy surrounding the *Copper Scroll*, see Betz & Riesner, *Jesus*, p. 60; Goranson, 'Sectarianism, Geography, and the Copper Scroll', *JJS* 43 (1992), 282-87; Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, pp. 149-58; —'Unravelling the Copper Scroll Code: A Study on the Topography of 3Q15', *RQ* 11 (1983), 323-65; Vermes, *DSSE*, pp. 308-10.

observes that no other topographic tradition of Christian sites in Jerusalem has been so thoroughly documented through the centuries as the location of the Upper Room, where the first group of hundred and twenty followers used to gather:²²³

(i) Many ancient sources speak of Mount Zion as the place of the Pentecost.²²⁴

(ii) There they place the seat of St James, 'the Brother of the Lord', the first head of the local community.

(iii) Mary, the mother of Jesus, is thought to have lived there, surrounded by other members of her family that had come from Galilee. The Dormition Church commemorates that event.

(iv) Ancient tradition has it that Jesus ate the last Pasch with his disciples in this vicinity, and later on appeared to them there after his passion.

Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, Mount Zion remained an important centre of Christian life. While Antioch became the centre of the Church for the Gentiles, Jerusalem continued as the Church of the Circumcision. The Judaeo-Christians maintained their Jewish identity even after the upheavals of A.D. 70 and A.D. 135.

If Pixner is right, then it is clear that the Essenes and the Christians were not geographically remote from each other; rather they were next door neighbours. But it is, of course, not true that close proximity need have effect on ideology. We need to look at some more structural and sociological perspectives of the two groups in order to make intelligent comparisons between them.

5.3 The Use of Scripture

5.3.1 *The Use of Scripture in Essenism*

The centrality of biblical study among the Qumran Essenes is evident by the numerous reinterpretations of scripture in the DSS. While the Torah constituted

²²³ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, pp. 287-326.

²²⁴ B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision: History and Archaeology of the Judaeo-Christians* trans E. Hoade, Publications of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum [small series 2] (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1971), pp. 3-14, 116-22. For counter arguments to the Bagatti-Testa hypothesis that early Jewish-Christians preserved and venerated the holy places of Christendom in Palestine, see J. E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 1-47.

scripture *par excellence* for the sect, as for the rest of Judaism, the prophetic books and indeed the Psalms, too, were undoubtedly considered inspired, since they were provided with commentary. On the whole, the DSS attests a remarkable influence of the canonical OT. Almost all the books of the OT are referred to in the DSS.²²⁵ There are also pieces of targums (e.g. 4QtgLev; 4QtgJob), as well as poetic, liturgical and astronomical texts. A few extra-canonical books, such as *Jubilees* and probably *I Enoch*, seem to have been regarded as authoritative within the community.²²⁶

We have noted above the sectaries' application of Isa 40.3 (1QS 8.12-14) to themselves.²²⁷ While they saw themselves as repeating the history of Israel in the days of Moses, they did not see the OT prophecies as messages which were relevant in an earlier period and now, via *peshet*²²⁸ interpretation, also applicable to them. Herein lies a fundamental difference between the later OT prophets and the sectaries in their interpretation and application of prophecy. When the former echoed the words of their predecessors, they did so with the understanding that these prophetic messages could be adapted to the new situation or crisis.²²⁹ The sectaries, on other hand, took their selected prophecies to be exclusively applicable to their situation alone. In order to make the biblical text fit into a new historical situation of his day, the commentator often disregarded its original context (e.g. 1QpHab 4.1-12). In fact the covenanters understood their situation as that which God had in view when he revealed his purpose to the prophets, and later supplemented by further revelation to the Teacher of Righteousness. This is exemplified by the interpretation of Hab 2.1-2:

²²⁵ Vermes, *DSSE*, p. xiv. The Qumran discovery does not only verify the antiquity of the Masoretic Text (MT), but confirms the wider use and the antiquity of the Hebrew text underlying the LXX, and the greater tolerance for diversity and fluidity between texts.

²²⁶ F. G. Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* trans W. G. E. Watson (NY: Brill, 1994), pp. xxvii, 143-53, 238-62, 301-457 (hereafter cited *DSS*); VanderKam, *Scrolls Today*, pp. 153-57.

²²⁷ See §4.3.3.

²²⁸ As Brooke has rightly pointed out, the use of the term *peshet* with reference to the Qumran commentaries is to 'be seen as an example of early Jewish *midrash*'. For further discussion of the generic definition of *peshet*, see Brooke, 'Qumran Peshet: Towards the Redefinition of a Genre', *RQ* 10 (1981), 483-503.

²²⁹ An example is the reinterpretation of the seventy years of Jer 25.11-13; 29.10 in terms of the seventy heptads of years of Dan 9.24-27. Note also the reinterpretation of Balaam's ships from Kittim in Num 24.24 to denote a Roman fleet in Dan 11.30.

And God told Habakkuk to write what was going to happen to the last generation, but he did not let him know the end of the age. And as for what he says: *Hab* 2:2] 'So that the one who reads it/ may run/'. Its interpretation concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God has disclosed all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets. *Hab* 2.3 For the vision has an appointed time, it will have an end and not fail (1QpHab 7.1-5).²³⁰

This passage is typical of the hermeneutical principles in the Qumran commentaries. It sums up succinctly the underlying assumptions of the sectaries' biblical interpretation. First, there is the recurrent expression *פֶּשֶׁר עַל*, which may be translated as 'this is interpreted as', 'this refers to', or 'this means'. Secondly, God revealed his purpose for the end time to the prophets, but the interpretation of these mysteries had to await the coming of the Teacher of Righteousness. The sectaries' hermeneutical axioms are a direct result of this self-understanding. In his comments on Qumran hermeneutics, Bruce observes:

This principle, that the divine purpose cannot be properly understood until the *peshet* has been revealed as well as the *raz*, underlies the biblical exegesis in the Qumran commentaries. The *raz* was communicated by God to the prophet, but the meaning of that communication remained sealed until its *peshet* was made known by God to His chosen interpreter. The chosen interpreter was the Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran community.²³¹

The Qumran commentator has also been suspected of either deliberately altering the text in various places to reinforce its new application, or using textual variants that best serve his situation. For example, in 1QpHab 8 the commentator explains *Hab* 2.5a by substituting *חַיִּים* (wealth) for MT *יַיִן* (wine) and links this interpretation with verses 6-9 to identify the man of covetousness with the Wicked Priest:

Its interpretation concerns the Wicked Priest, who is called by the name of loyalty at the start of his office. However, when he ruled Israel his heart became conceited, he deserted God and betrayed the laws for the sake of riches. And he stole and hoarded wealth...And he seized public money, incurring additional serious sin (1QpHab 8.8-12).²³²

Moreover, the commentator resorts to the use of allegory where there is difficulty in establishing a relation between the text and the new situation. This method of biblical interpretation is referred to by Brownlee as 'the allegorical propriety'. For example, 'Lebanon' and 'the beasts' are originally mentioned with reference to the

²³⁰ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 200.

²³¹ Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1959), pp. 9-10.

²³² Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp.11-19; Martínez, *DSST*, p. 200.

cutting down of its cedars by the Chaldeans for military and other purposes, and game hunting in this habitat respectively (Hab 2.17). However, in 1QpHab 11.17-12.5 'Lebanon' is interpreted as the 'Council of the Community' and 'the beasts' as the 'Simple of Judah who keep the Law'.²³³

In his discussion of the sectaries' exegetical practices, Longenecker has demonstrated that while we cannot deny midrashic modes of treatment in the Qumran commentaries, they must not be allowed to take precedence or ascendancy over the *peshet* interpretation. Longenecker takes his point of departure from the recurring emphasis on the mysteries or *raz-peshet* motif in the Qumran commentaries. There is a constant reference to the idea that God has given to the Teacher of Righteousness the key to the interpretation of divine mysteries. This is borne out by 1QH 4.27-29a:

Through me Thou has illumined the face of the Congregation and hast shown Thine infinite power. For Thou has given me knowledge through Thy marvellous mysteries, and hast shown Thyself mighty within me in the midst of Thy marvellous Council. Thou hast done wonders before the Congregation for the sake of Thy glory, that they may make known Thy mighty deeds to all the living.

This *raz-peshet* may be likened to the kind of interpretation found in the Book of Daniel (Dan 2.28, 30; 4.24; 5.12, 16, 26; 7.16; 8.117, 19). However, in Daniel, the mystery and its interpretation are communicated to different parties. The divine communication can be understood only when the mystery and the interpretation are brought together. The book of Daniel seems to offer an appropriate model for the biblical exegesis among the sectaries. It is first revelatory in the sense that some of the prophecies given by God through the prophets are cryptic and coded, which no one could understand until the Teacher of Righteousness was given the interpretive key.²³⁴

We may sum up the sectaries' use of scripture as follows: (i) the purposes of God revealed to the prophets were full of mystery, which had reference to what was to

²³³ For detailed discussion of Brownlee's ten proposed methods of biblical interpretation among the Qumran sectaries, see his 'Biblical Interpretation among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls', BA 14 (1951), 53-76; — *The Midrash Peshet of Habakkuk* SBLMS 24 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979). See also Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in Its Jewish Context* JSOTSup 29 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), pp. 36-44, 283-88; Vermes, 'The Qumran Interpretation of Scripture in its Historical Setting', *ALUOS* 6 (1969), 85-97; K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), pp. 190-94.

²³⁴ R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 38-51. For more discussion of Qumran exegetical practices, see Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran*, pp. 279-323.

take place at the end of time; (ii) these prophecies, which had hidden meaning, applied to the commentator's own generation; and (iii) though revealed to the prophets, the mysteries were supplemented by further revelation to the Teacher of Righteousness.

5.3.2 The Use of Scripture in the Early Church

Like the Qumran sectaries, the early Christians frequently quoted the OT either to authenticate or explain an idea or event. Particularly notable are the ten distinctive fulfilment citations in Matthew's Gospel.²³⁵ In each case a passage from one of the prophets is introduced by the formula: 'Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet'. The Evangelist clearly believed in the importance and relevance of the OT scriptures. Similarly, in Luke's story of Pentecost, Peter quoted a number of scriptural passages to prove and explain that this unique event was part of God's predetermined plan for the Christian community at the end time (Acts 2.14-36).²³⁶ As a number of scholars have observed, this NT use of the OT is akin to the sectaries' historical approach to biblical interpretation.²³⁷

There are further parallels between the NT writers and the Qumran sectaries in their interpretation of scripture. For example, the Christian community perceived itself as the elect of God, the recipient of the new covenant at the end time (Mk 10.29-31; Matt 11.25-30; John 14.1-3). Jesus himself began his ministry with the proclamation, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel' (Mk 1.14-15 and par). Paul also warned his readers, 'upon whom the end of the ages has come', to take heed lest they fall into the same unbelief as their forebears in the old dispensation (1 Cor 10.11-12). According to the author of the letter to the Hebrews, 'God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he has appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world' (Heb 1.1-2; 9.26).

²³⁵ See note 40 above.

²³⁶ For example, Acts 2.16-17 (cf. Joel 2.28; Isa 44.3; Ezek 11.19); verse 25 (cf. Ps 16.8); verse 34 (cf. Ps 110.1).

²³⁷ Stendahl, *School of St Matthew*, pp. 181-202; F. M. Cross, *Library of Qumran*, p. 218.

Besides the note of fulfilment and the belief that they were living in the crisis hour, the early Christians were convinced that to them had been revealed the mystery of God's salvation for the last days: Ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ (Mk 4.11 and par; see also Rom 16.25-27; 11.25-26; Col 2.1-3; 1 Tim 3.16). Peter, too, refers to the salvation of God 'ready to be revealed in the last time' to God's elect (1 Pet 1.5-9), and in a manner reminiscent of the revelation of divine mysteries to the Teacher of Righteousness, writes:

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look (1 Pet 1.10-12; cf. Acts 2.16).

While the term 'mystery' is not used by Peter, his claim that those things which had been hidden from the prophets were now revealed to him and his fellow apostles is similar to the DSS, where the key to the interpretation of the divine mysteries recorded by the prophets were revealed to the Teacher of Righteousness and his followers.

Furthermore, in the *peshet* of Hab 2.2-4, the author of 1QpHab 7 urged his readers to wait though 'the final age shall be prolonged, and shall exceed all that the Prophets have said; for the mysteries of God are astounding' (1QpHab 7.7-9).²³⁸ During this period of waiting, 'the men of truth' will continue to keep the law until the time appointed by God 'in the mysteries of his prudence' when he will save them through 'their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness' (1QpHab 7.10-8.3a). Similarly, the author of Hebrews urged his readers to tarry and have faith in the coming figure: ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει· ὁ δὲ δίκαιός μου ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, καὶ ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ (Heb 10.37-39). Paul, too, invoked Hab 2.4 to encourage his readers to exercise faith in Jesus (Rom 1.17; Gal 3.11). Moreover, Paul's allegorising use of the story of Sarah/Isaac and Hagar/Ishmael in Gal 4.21-31 is similar to the sectaries' allegorisation of scripture.

²³⁸ Martínez, *DSS*, p. 200.

There is also a striking correspondence between the role of Jesus as the interpreter of the prophecies for the early Church and the Teacher of Righteousness. According to Luke, the risen Jesus appeared to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, and 'beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' (Lk 24.13-27). Finally, when Jesus met with all the disciples in Jerusalem, shortly before his ascension, he reminded them that everything written about him 'in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures' (Lk 24.44-46). It could therefore be said that Jesus was to the early Church what the Teacher of Righteousness was to the Qumran covenanters.

There are, however, differences between the way both Qumran and the early Church interpreted scripture. For example, Jesus is more central to the early Church's interpretation of the OT than the Teacher of Righteousness to Qumran. In fact, for the early Church, Jesus was the embodiment and fulfilment of scripture (e.g. Lk 14.44; Acts 10.43; 2 Cor 1.20). The hermeneutic of the early Christians was pre-eminently Christological. Secondly, the early Church interpreted scripture to include the gathering in of both Jews and Gentiles (through faith in Jesus Christ) in the new commonwealth of Israel (e.g. Rom 11.5-7; Gal 6.11-16). This extension of the Abrahamic covenant to Gentiles would have been unacceptable to the Qumran covenanters. Thirdly, while justification by faith was not unknown in the DSS (1QpHab 7.14-8.3), the idea of the justification of the ungodly in the NT (e.g. Rom 4.5) would have been alien to the sectaries.

5.4 Eschatology

5.4.1 *The Doctrine of the Two Ages in Essenism*

In general terms, Jewish eschatology expressed the doctrine of the two ages, namely, the belief that the present evil age of human suffering through wars and natural disasters would precede the new age of God's kingdom of peace, righteousness and

justice when the faith of the righteous would be vindicated.²³⁹ This transcendental eschatology inspired the various freedom and resistance movements in Judaism. It is arguable that this vision of a glorious future age kept the struggle for freedom and restoration of national sovereignty alive during the Maccabean revolt, and sustained the uprisings of the Zealots during the Christian era, reaching its climax in the Bar Kochba war of A.D. 132-135. Yahweh might appear to have abandoned his people to the heathen oppressor, but there was always the hope, as far as the apocalyptic visionary was concerned, that a military saviour would arise to assist the leaders in their bid for reform and speed up the dawn of the golden age.²⁴⁰

The Qumran sect, as we have seen, believed that it was living in the eschaton. In line with the above Jewish thought the sectaries accepted the doctrine of the two ages: the present age of wickedness, when evil would flourish, and a messianic period when 'the penitents of the desert who, saved, shall live for a thousand generations and to whom all the glory of Adam shall belong, as also to their seed for ever'.²⁴¹ There are references to the present age when the land is made desolate because of Israel's sin. In this age God has called out a 'remnant' through whom the covenant with Israel is renewed, in order 'to reveal to them the hidden things in which all Israel had gone astray' (לֵהֶם נִסְתָּרוֹת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲזוּ בָם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל) CD 3.14).²⁴² Such people 'are destined to live for ever and all the glory of Adam shall be theirs', an expression which recalls man's sinless state prior to the fall (CD 3.20).

In 1QS, it was further held that, as this present evil age drew to its close, the sectaries would have to face trials of all sorts to test their fitness and worthiness to participate in the new age:

²³⁹ C. Rowland, *Christian Origins: An Account of the Setting and Character of the most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985), pp. 87-92.

²⁴⁰ For further discussion, see D. C. Allison, Jr., *The End of the Ages has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 5-25.

²⁴¹ *Commentary on Psalms* (4Q171.III. 1-2 [Ps 37.18-19a]). Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 291.

²⁴² E. Lohse ed., *Die Texte aus Qumran: Hebräisch und Deutsch* 4th edn. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), p. 70. Most commentators rightly suggest that the notion of the 'new covenant' (בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה) in CD 6.18-19; 8.20-21; 19.33-34; 20.11-13 and 1QpHab 2.1-4 comes from Jeremiah's prophecy in 31.31-34, even though this prophecy is not explicitly referred to in the above texts, nor in the rest of the extant DSS. For further discussion, see S. Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews* JSNTSup 44 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 43-46.

All those who join the order of the community shall enter into a covenant before God to do all he has commanded and not to turn back from following him through any fear or terror or trial which takes place during the reign of Belial (1QS 1.16-18a).²⁴³

But for those who walk in wickedness, their ultimate fate is 'in the gloom of everlasting fire' in the age to come. Their visitation will be 'abundant chastisements at the hand of the destroying angels, eternal destruction brought about by the anger of the avenging God, perpetual terror, and everlasting shame with the ignominy of destruction in the fires of darkness' (1QS 2.8a; 4.12-14).²⁴⁴ The thought here is the punishment of the wicked after the end of the present age. The idea of darkness and fire as the means of punishment for the wicked after the judgment of this age is also found in some of the intertestamental literature, where there are frequent references to angels as the executors of this punishment.²⁴⁵

5.4.2 *The Doctrine of the Two Ages in the Early Church*

While the parallels between the Qumran concept of the two ages and that of the early Church may reflect a general trend in the Judaism of that period, some of them are nonetheless striking. For example, the synoptic account of the great tribulation (Mk 13 and par) reflects the present experience of the early Church, extending from the passion of Jesus to the Parousia (Mk 14-15 and par).²⁴⁶ Jesus interpreted his ministry in terms of the 'messianic woes' and mentioned the fate of the disciples in the coming time of trouble in connection with his own fate (Mk 13.9, 11-12 and par).

Paul also considered his own time to be part of the messianic woes, referring to it as the era of the 'impending distress', when 'the form of this world is passing away' (1 Cor 7.26-31).²⁴⁷ His conviction concerning the eschatological character of the present time finds expression in 'the mystery of lawlessness that is already at work', even though its full manifestation is in the future (2 Thess 2.1-13). In the general

²⁴³ Knibb, *Qumran Community*, p. 82.

²⁴⁴ Knibb, *Qumran Community*, pp. 83, 99.

²⁴⁵ *1 Enoch* 53.3; 90.26-7; 103.7-8; *Jub.* 7.29; *Test Zeb.* 10.1-4.

²⁴⁶ R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950), pp. 48-59.

²⁴⁷ J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), pp. 145-46.

eschatological orientation of Rom 8.18-25, Paul specifically contrasts 'the suffering of this present time' with 'the glory that is to be revealed to us' (Rom 8.18). However, a central tenet of Pauline theology is that the messianic age has already dawned for believers (1 Cor 10.11; 15.25; Gal 4.4). Believers in Christ are a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5.17), rescued 'from the present evil age' (Gal 1.4). The first advent marked the inbreaking of God's kingdom, which has effectively dawned with the passion of Jesus, in which the believer participates (Rom 6.4-11; 8.17; Gal 2.19-20; 2 Cor 4.10).²⁴⁸

The gift of eternal life in the synoptics refers strictly to the future, at the second advent (Mk 10.17, 31 and par; Matt 25.46; cf. Mk 9.43, 45; Matt 7.14), though it is a present reality in the fourth Gospel (John 6.47; cf. 3.15-16, 36; 6.51, 58; 8.51-52; 11.24-26; 10.28). Yet John's Gospel contains references to a coming resurrection at 'the last day' (6.39-40, 44, 54; 7.37; 11.24; 12.48).

There are a number of references to the theme of darkness and burning fire as the eternal punishment for the wicked (Matt. 3.10, 12; 7.19; 13.40-41; 18.8; 25.30, 41; Lk 3.9; 2 Pet. 2.4; 3.10-14). In the Book of Revelation the eschatological battle between the forces of the devil and God is graphically portrayed. Here, too, the fate of the devil and all those who walk in wickedness is sealed for 'the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever' (Rev 20.10). Furthermore, the tribulation and suffering which characterise the present experience of the readers (Rev 2.9-10, 13; cf. 2.3; 12.17; 13.7) is contrasted with the time of renewal at the eschaton (Rev 21).

While the above similarities may be significant, the context of the two ages perceived by the two communities appears different. For the early Church, the expected new age refers to the end of this present world-order, when the ascended Lord will return to claim his followers to the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21; Gal 4.26; Heb 12.22). However, the end of the present evil age for the sectaries referred, *inter alia*, to the time when the existing earthly Jerusalem temple would be restored and purified of

²⁴⁸ A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul* trans. W. Montgomery repr (London: A. & C. Black, 1967), pp. 141-59.

its pollution and abuse from the infidels (11QT). But even here the difference cannot be overstretched as both groups expected a renewal of the existing world order.

5.5 Dualism

5.5.1 *Dualism of the Two Spirits in Essenism*

Reflected in 1QS is the dualism of the 'two spirits in man', the spirit of truth, light, uprightness, and humility on one side, and the spirit of falsehood, darkness and wickedness on the other. According to the 'two spirits' discourse (1QS 3.13-4.26), behind both spirits are the 'Prince of Light' (שֵׁר אֹרִיִּים) and the 'Angel of Darkness' (מִלְאֲךָ חוֹשֶׁךְ) respectively:

He created man to rule the world, and he assigned two spirits that he might walk by them until the appointed time of his visitation; they are the spirits of truth and of injustice. From a spring of light come the generations of truth, and from a well of darkness the generations of injustice. Control over all the sons of righteousness lies in the hand of the prince of lights, and they walk in the ways of light; complete control over the sons of injustice lies in the hand of the angel of darkness, and they walk in the ways of darkness (1QS 3.17-21a).²⁴⁹

According to the above passage, the Angel of Darkness exercises dominion over the sons of perversity, who operate with the spirit of darkness, while the Prince of Light controls the sons of righteousness, who walk in the 'ways of light'. In the struggle for control over the cosmos, 'the sons of light' (בְּנֵי אֹרֶךְ)²⁵⁰ are assisted by 'the God of Israel and his loyal angel' (מִלְאֲךָ אֱמֶתוֹ, 1QS 3.24; cf. 1QM 12.7-8), who may be identified with the Prince of Lights (שֵׁר אֹרִיִּים).²⁵¹

In language which describes the predestinarian view of the Essenes, the psalmist states that God '[has divided men] into good and evil in accordance with the spirits of their lot; [in accordance with] their [divisions do they accomplish] their task' (1QH 14.11-12; cf. 15.14-19).²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Knibb, *Qumran Community*, p. 94.

²⁵⁰ The Essenes' self-designation as 'sons of light' is a common theme in the DSS (e.g. 1QS 1.9; 3.19-24; 1QM 1.11-16).

²⁵¹ M. J. Davidson, *Angels at Qumran: A Comparative Study of 1 Enoch 1-36, 72-108 and Sectarian Writings from Qumran* JSPSup 11 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 146-47; J. H. Charlesworth, 'A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS 3:13-4:26 and the "Dualism" Contained in the Gospel of John', in J. H. Charlesworth ed., *John and Qumran* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972), pp. 76-106.

²⁵² The division of mankind into good and evil is also noticeable in a some of the writings of the second temple period (e.g. *Ps of Sol* 3; 15.4-15; *1 Enoch* 90.18-19).

The dualistic language of the sectaries describes the two options or positions available in the universe, which have no mediating ground between them. Under the 'two spirits' discourse, however, several types of dualism can be identified. These include: cosmic, psychological, ethical and eschatological dualism.

5.5.1.1 *Cosmic and Psychological Dualism*

The sectaries' understanding of the two forces in the world, the spirits of truth/light and falsehood/darkness, is basic to their beliefs about the nature of man. According to them, all people are under the control of either spirit. The controlling spirit determines not only a person's behaviour but also that person's ultimate destiny. Therefore, those who have a preponderance of the spirit of truth will conduct themselves in the realm of truth. Conversely, those dominated by the spirit of falsehood will act in accordance with the ethos of the realm of perversity.

There is also the idea that both spirits influence the patterns of human behaviour. The two spirits discourse suggests that within each man exist simultaneously both good and evil spirits. Consequently, the sporadic baneful behaviour of the righteous man is said to be inspired by the spirit of darkness which is in constant struggle with the spirit of light within the heart of man:

It is through the angel of darkness that all the sons of righteousness go astray, and all their sins, their iniquities, their guilt, and their deeds of transgression are under his control in their mysteries of God until his time. All their afflictions and their time of distress are brought about by his rule of hatred, and all the spirits of his lot make the sons of light stumble. But the God of Israel and his angel of truth help all the sons of light. He created the spirits of light and darkness, and upon them he founded every deed, [and upon] their [ways] every work.

Until now the spirits of truth and falsehood struggle in the heart of men and they walk in both wisdom and folly.²⁵³

Notice again the antithesis between good and evil, which are constantly contrasted under the figures of light and darkness, or truth and iniquity.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ 1QS 3.21b-26a; 4.23.cf. 1QS 4.15-18. Knibb has suggested that there may be affinities between the dualistic language employed here to describe the contrast between the two spirits in 1QS and the passages on the 'Two Ways' found in early Christian writings, for example, *Didache* 1-6, *Epistle of Barnabas* 18-21. See Knibb, *Qumran Community*, p. 95.

²⁵⁴ Driver, *Judaean Scrolls*, p. 545.

5.5.1.2 *Ethical and Eschatological Dualism*

Qumran dualism is further expressed in terms of the light versus darkness paradigm. The contrast between the two spirits is manifested in the virtues and vices of the sons of light and darkness. According to the sectaries, there are two distinct and mutually exclusive groups of people: one group is characterised by light and virtues and the other by darkness and vices. For example, the ways of the sons of light are characterised by righteousness, humility, patience, charity, unending goodness, understanding, intelligence and hatred for idols (1QS 4.2-6); while the deeds of the spirit of injustice include, among others, greed, wickedness, falsehood, pride, haughtiness, impatience, folly and evil cunning (1QS 4.9-11).²⁵⁵

There are vivid descriptions of the eschatological bliss or calamity awaiting those who walk in one or the other way. This tension between truth and falsehood will continue until the time of divine intervention:

The nature of all the children of men is ruled by these (two spirits), and during their life all the hosts of men have a portion of their divisions and walk in (both) their ways...For God has established the spirits in equal measure until the final age, and has set everlasting hatred between their divisions. Truth abhors the work of falsehood, and falsehood hates all the ways of truth. And their struggle is fierce in their arguments for they do not walk together (1QS 4.15-18; cf. 4.23-25).

For those who walk by the spirit of falsehood/darkness, their visitation, at the end of time, will be 'humiliation of destruction by fire at the dark regions...without there being a remnant or survivor among them' (1QS 4.13-14).²⁵⁶ But the visitation of those who walk by the spirit of truth/light will be 'healing, great peace...fruitfulness, together with everlasting blessing and eternal joy...a crown of glory and a garment of majesty in unending light' (1QS 4.6b-8).

Apart from 1QS, dualistic language is also prominent in 1QM where the eschatological warfare between the sons of light and the sons of darkness is treated. Here in symbolic language, the eternal struggle between the spirits of light and darkness is rehearsed. The different phases of the battle, its plan and duration are

²⁵⁵ Knibb, *Qumran Community*, p. 99.

²⁵⁶ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 7.

predetermined. In the initial stages of the battle, it would appear that the sons of darkness will triumph over the sons of light, but through the intervention of God a mortal blow will be dealt to Satan and his army (1QM 1.10-12; 15.12-16; 17.5-6).

5.5.2 Dualism of the Two Spirits in the Early Church

Several scholars have noted the numerous and varied points of contact between the DSS and the NT teaching about the dualism of the two spirits. For example, Flusser suggests that since most of the parallels to the DSS occur in material which is common to all or at least to several NT authors, 'we must suppose that there existed a stratum of Christian thought which was especially influenced by Sectarian ideas, and that John the Evangelist, Paul and the authors of most other NT Epistles based themselves on the theological achievements of this stratum'.²⁵⁷ However, it is also possible that individual NT authors were directly or indirectly influenced by the sectarians. At least this seemed to be the case for JB and some of the core members of Jesus' disciples who came from the Baptist group.²⁵⁸

As noted above, the sectarian dualistic outlook leads to a fundamental division of all mankind into two camps: (i) the sons of darkness (who walk in the realm of darkness, where the Prince of Darkness holds sway); and (ii) the sons of light (who operate in the realm of light and truth, where the Prince of Light exercises his dominion). Like the sectaries, the early Christians referred to themselves as the sons of light, who walk in the spirit of love, righteousness and truth (Lk 16.8; Eph 5.8; 1 Thess 5.5). While the corresponding sectarian epithet 'sons of darkness' is not found in the NT, the underlying idea that the wicked are motivated by the spirit of darkness is clearly attested (Lk 22.53; Gal 4.9; Eph 2.2; 5.6; Col 1.13).

However, it is in the Pauline corpus and in the Johannine literature that the closest parallels in the NT have been identified. For example, the antithesis between the Angel of Darkness and the Prince of Light occurs as Belial-Christ in 2 Cor 6.14-16.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Flusser, *Judaism*, p. 24.

²⁵⁸ See chapters 4 and 9.

²⁵⁹ See §6.4.

Elsewhere Paul warns his readers to beware of false apostles because 'even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light' (2 Cor 11.14). Paul exhorts the believers to hate evil and uphold that which is good (Rom 12.9-10; 1 Thess 5.21-22; cf. 1QS 1.3-11).

Moreover, Paul's doctrine about the 'flesh' and 'spirit' shares a lot in common with the DSS. According to Kuhn, 'flesh' in the DSS represents the 'area of human weakness through the natural inclinations of man', almost synonymous with evil (1QH 4.29; 1QM 4.3).²⁶⁰ He suggests that 'flesh' in Paul signifies the evil existence of mankind. Man is 'flesh' because he sins and stands under an evil power (Rom 7.14, 24; 1 Cor 3.3; Eph 2.3-7).²⁶¹ As in the Qumran texts, 'flesh' is contrasted with the Spirit of God, which brings about the election-by-grace accepted by both communities (Rom 8.1-17; Gal 4.6-7; Phil 3.3; cf. 1QS 11.6-10).²⁶²

Furthermore, the contrast between the behaviour and the fate of those dominated by the spirits of truth and injustice may be compared with Gal 5.16-25, where a similar contrast is drawn between the kind of behaviour compatible with those who walk in the spirit and those who act according to the dictates of the flesh or the lower carnal nature.

However, there is a fundamental difference between Paul and the sectaries with regard to the antithesis between the two spirits. While both understood the 'spirit' to be that of God, the basis for Paul's understanding is Christological, namely, the historical act of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the linguistic and conceptual similarities between the DSS and the NT are nowhere as pronounced as in the Johannine literature. There is in the Johannine corpus a preponderance of almost all the phrases that we have encountered so far in the preceding discussion on Essene dualism (e.g. ζῶν αἰώνιος John 3.15-16, 14, 36;

²⁶⁰ K. G. Kuhn, 'New Light on Temptation, Sin, and Flesh in the New Testament', in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp.94-113; W. D. Davies, 'Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Flesh and Spirit', in *Scrolls and New Testament*, pp. 157-82.

²⁶¹ Perhaps the same kind of opposition is reflected in the Gethsemane passage 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Mk 14.38 and par).

²⁶² The OT offers a plausible background to the contrast between the 'flesh and spirit' (e.g. Gen 6.3; Isa 31.3), though the full theological connotation is explicable from the general context of both Qumran and the early Church. For neither community shows the negative attitude to the material world exemplified by the Pythagorean, Platonic or Gnostic view which perceives matter as base and contemptible. This negative perception of the universe and the human body is conspicuously absent in Judaism. See M. Wilcox, 'Dualism, Gnosticism, and other Elements in the Pre-Pauline Tradition', in *Scrolls and Christianity*, pp. 83-96.

υἱοὶ φωτὸς John 12.36; τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς
πλάνης 1 John 4.6b; John 4.36; 5.39; 8.44).²⁶³

Like the sectaries, the fourth Evangelist attaches an eschatological dimension to ζῶῃ αἰώνιος. As noted above, the bestowal of eternal life is part of the eschatological blessings to be enjoyed by the sons of truth (1QS 4.7-8). For the Evangelist, however, there is a richness to this concept: eternal life is a present reality through the Son (John 3.36; 6.54; 6.68; 10.28). For the sectaries and the fourth Evangelist, eternal life does not only denote an eternity, but also a special quality of life to be enjoyed by the sons of truth. Though very striking in the Johannine literature, the concept of 'eternal life' is also found in the synoptic Gospels, especially in the story of the man anxious 'to inherit eternal life' (Mk 10.17-22 and par; cf. John 12.25; Mk 8.35 and par; Matt 10.39).

There is a remarkable reminiscence of 1QS 3.18-23 in 1 John 4.1-6, with its distinction between the spirit of truth, or spirit of Christ, and the spirit of error, or antichrist. Here as in 1QS both spirits exist under the rule of God. For the writer of 1 John, while the spirit of truth is one, just as there is one Christ, the spirit of error is regarded as divisible, hence, many antichrists (1 John 2.18). The author warns his readers that to adopt a view which sees Jesus as separate from the Christ is to fall victim to the seductions of the liar and become part of the antichrist (1 John 2.22; 4.3).

Furthermore, in the Johannine literature the antithesis between light and darkness, truth and falsehood is exploited to greater effect (John 1.4-5; 3.19; 8.12; 12.35; 14.6; 16.13; 1 John 1.5; 5.6). This dualism recalls the bitter struggle that existed between the two opposing forces in the DSS. The opposing spirits are locked up in a titanic battle which, according to the Qumran sectaries, would soon climax at the defeat and destruction of the spirit of falsehood and darkness. In the Johannine corpus, the warfare is already won, Jesus Christ has overcome the evil forces of darkness and falsehood through the spirit of God (John 14.17; 15.26; 1 John 3.7-10; 1 John 4.13).

²⁶³ For further discussion, see Charlesworth, 'A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS III, 13-IV, 26 and the 'Dualism' contained in the Gospel of John', *NTS* 15 (1968), 389-418.

The close contacts between the Essene and Johannine dualism has led a number of scholars, including R. E. Brown and A. M. Hunter, to conclude that the Qumran community may provide an actual background for the fourth Gospel.²⁶⁴ Even those who are cautious to posit any direct influence of Qumran on Johannine thought forms concede that there are some associations between the two, and that John and Qumran presuppose a common background.²⁶⁵ Perhaps it is significant that J. Ashton, who stands in the Bultmannian tradition with its emphasis on Gnostic influence on John's Gospel, suggests that the fourth Evangelist was an Essene. According him, 'this is the easiest and most convenient explanation of the dualism that is such a notable characteristic of his thought and marks off his Gospel from the other three'.²⁶⁶ It is evident from above that Johannine dualism can be explained in terms of the Jewish apocalyptic background of the second temple period, typified by the Essenes, and not simply on the basis of Hellenistic and Gnostic dualism, as some have presupposed.²⁶⁷

5.5.3 *Predetermination and Election in Essenism*

According to the Qumran covenanters, their privileged position as the elect of God had been decided from the beginning of creation. This was part of the covenant which God made with Moses, and which was later on revealed to the Teacher of Righteousness (e.g. CD 15.5-11; 1QpHab 7.4f; 1QS 1.1-9; 5.7f). An important question which has exercised scholars in discussion of Qumran dualism is whether the sectaries held a belief in absolute determinism. In a description of three Jewish parties, Josephus notes the differing views held by each party on the question of fate or predeterminism:

As for the Pharisees, they say that certain events are the work of Fate, but not all; as to other events, it depends upon ourselves whether they shall take place or not. The sect of the Essenes, however, declares that Fate is mistress of all things, and

²⁶⁴ Brown, 'The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 183-207; — *John* (i-xii), pp. lxiii-iv; A. M. Hunter, *According to John* (London: SCM, 1968), pp. 23-33, esp. 27.

²⁶⁵ R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* vol 1 trans K. Smyth et al (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1968), pp. 134-35; Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 158.

²⁶⁶ J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 205.

²⁶⁷ I. de la Potterie, 'The Truth in Saint John' in J. Ashton ed., *The Interpretation of John* IRT 9 (London: SPCK, 1986), pp. 53-66.

that nothing befalls men unless it be in accordance with her decree. But the Sadducees do away with Fate, holding that there is no such thing and that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our own power, so that we ourselves are responsible for our well-being, while we suffer misfortune through our own thoughtlessness (*Ant* 13.171-73; cf. *War* 2.162-65).

1QS confirms Josephus' claim that the concept of predetermination of all things is fundamental to Essene thought:

From the God of Knowledge comes all that is and shall be. Before ever they existed He established their whole design, and when, as ordained for them, they come into being, it is in accord with His glorious design that they accomplish their task without change. The laws of all things are in His hand and He provides them with all their needs (1QS 3.15-17).

Furthermore, there appears to be a strong deterministic element in an admonition apparently directed at the leaders of the sect: 'in order to love all the sons of light, each one according to *his lot* in God's plan, and to detest all the sons of darkness, each one in accordance with his blame in God's vindication' (1QS 1.9b-11a).²⁶⁸ The expression 'his lot in God's plan' or his 'destiny' may carry with it some deterministic connotations. God himself is responsible for everything and has, from the beginning, determined the destiny of every individual:

All things come to pass by His Knowledge;
He establishes all things by His design
and without Him nothing is done (1QS 11.11).
For without Thee no way is perfect,
and without Thy will nothing is done.
It is Thou who has taught all knowledge
and all things come to pass by Thy will (1QS 11.17-18a).

The determinism pervading the above passages suggests that individuals should not be held culpable for their sins, since behaviour depends on one's inheritance in the lots of truth and perversity (1QS 4.24). By implication, God is responsible for the evil in the world.

Elsewhere, however, there appears a juxtaposition of determinism and the freedom to exercise one's free will:²⁶⁹

I know that the inclination of every spirit [is in Thy hand];
Thou didst establish [all] its [ways] before ever creating it,
and how can any man change Thy words?
Thou alone didst [create] the just

²⁶⁸ Italics mine. Martínez, *DSST*, p. 3.

²⁶⁹ Here the Pharisees, according to Josephus, are very close to the Essenes. See *Ant* 18.13.

and established him from the womb...
But the wicked Thou didst create
for [the time] of Thy [wrath],
Thou didst vow them from the womb
to the Day of Massacre (1QH 15.18b-21).

By Thy wisdom [all things exist from] eternity,
and before creating them Thou knewest their works
for ever and ever.
[Nothing] is done [without Thee]
and nothing is known unless Thou desire it (1QH 1.7-8).

Yet the author knows of divine grace which is available for all who desire to walk
in the covenant of God:

But those who please Thee
shall stand before Thee forever,
Those who walk in the way of Thy heart
shall be established forevermore
Clinging to Thee, I shall stand
I will rise against those who despised me (1QH 4.21-22a).

It cannot be gainsaid that the deterministic view of human destiny is far reaching
among the Qumran sectaries. This has led some to suggest that the Qumran sectaries
espoused an absolute deterministic theology. According to this absolute dualism, one
was at birth either predestined to the side of the righteous or the wicked. For the
sectaries, God, in the mysteries of his divine will, has, for a limited period, delivered
part of the cosmos to the rule of Belial.²⁷⁰

In spite of the marked determinism in the DSS, it is unlikely that the sectaries
rejected belief in human freedom of choice and ability to make ethical decisions. The
discussion of the two spirits revealed the tension between the spirit of truth and the
spirit of falsehood which seek constantly to control human destiny. The righteous are
not immune to this.²⁷¹ They, too, must exercise their will if they are to overcome evil.
Moreover, one could escape an evil destiny by joining the community.²⁷²

The sectaries emphasised the importance of virtuous works, and the men of the
community were blamed for succumbing and yielding their will to temptation and evil
deeds (CD 3.7-12; 1QS 8.26-9.1). Moreover, there is a strong emphasis on repentance

²⁷⁰ J. Licht, 'The Doctrine of the Thanksgiving Scroll', *IEJ* 6 (1956), 1-13, 89-101, esp. 5-6.

²⁷¹ Leaney, *Rule of Qumran*, p. 149; Burrows, *More Light*, pp. 287-89. See also Jub 10.8; 11.5, 11; 17.16; 18.9, 12; 19.28.

²⁷² Licht, 'The Doctrine of the Thanksgiving Scroll', 89-101.

and reform for recalcitrant members of the community (1QS 1.24-2.1; 3.6-11; cf. CD 20.28-30). E. P. Sanders rightly observes that the concepts of determinism and free will should not be viewed as alternative theological beliefs, but as varying explanations of the community's self-understanding. Thus, in spite of the tension, the two ideas are not mutually exclusive.²⁷³

The strong emphasis on both predetermination and one's freedom of choice was largely the result of the intense sectarian life at Qumran. They were conscious of their election as repositories of divine mysteries, and insisted that they alone exercised the right obedience and commitment to the law of God. Consequently they expressed their gratitude to God's grace for choosing them above others. Therefore, in spite of the deterministic elements in the passages noted above, the sectaries' teaching was not wholly deterministic. The predestinarian themes noticed in some of the passages may be corollaries of the relative nature of Qumran dualism discussed above.

5.5.4 *Predetermination and Election in the Early Church*

The doctrine of predestination in the DSS may be compared to similar teaching in Paul's writings. Like the author of 1QH, the apostle seems to suggest that he was predestined to be an apostle prior to his conception and birth: 'But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me' (Gal 1.15-16). Paul here juxtaposes his pre-Christian life and his conversion experience to underline his independent apostleship. This predestinarian theme may also be implied in Rom 8.29-30:

ὅτι οὓς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς· οὓς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὓς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὓς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν (cf. 1 Cor 2.7).²⁷⁴

²⁷³ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 257-70; Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspective in Tension* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981), pp. 75-83.

²⁷⁴ For further discussion, see Dunn, *Romans* vol 1 WBC 38 (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), pp. 445-95; K. Graystone, 'The Doctrine of Election in Rom 8.28-30', *SE 2* (1964), 574-83.

God's sovereign control over events and his action in choosing and calling people to himself is effected through Jesus Christ (e.g. Q=Matt 11.25-27//Lk 10.21-22; John 3.27; 5.1-17; 6.37, 65; 9.1-310.15-16; 15.16, 19; 11.4).²⁷⁵ At the Parousia, Jesus will gather God's elect (Mk 13.20, 27 and par; Lk 18.7). The elect are distinguished by their faith in God and by the quality of their lives (Titus 1.1; 2 Pet 1.10; Rev 17.14). In fact, Jesus himself is referred to as ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος, ὁ ἐκλεκτός and ἀκρογωνιαίον ἐκλεκτὸν (Lk 9.35; 23.35; 1 Pet 2.6 respectively).

Particularly striking are the following in the letter to the Ephesians:

καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, προορίσας ἡμᾶς, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ (1.4-5).
 τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ ἣν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ (1.9).
 ἐκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν, κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ (1.11).

Here Paul expresses gratitude to God, on behalf of the Ephesians, for all the spiritual blessings that they have enjoyed through Jesus Christ. More significant is the idea of choice implied by the above phrases, which carry the meaning of God's sovereign choice of the Ephesians from the mass of mankind for himself.²⁷⁶ In either case the choosing is πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, an expression which occurs again in John 17.24 and 1 Pet 1.20.²⁷⁷ One can hardly fail to notice the intensity of the deterministic view noted in the DSS, where God's foreordination is celebrated particularly in a hymnic context in 1QH 15.13-22. Here in Ephesians it focuses on the divine action which makes sonship the ultimate goal for the elect.

K. G. Kuhn points out that many of the stylistic features of Ephesians, particularly the first half (1.3-3.21) with its impressive long-drawn-out sentences using relative clauses, participial constructions, prepositional phrases and synonyms, are characteristic of the Hebraic style of the liturgical and hymnic language employed by the

²⁷⁵ Carson, *Sovereignty*, pp. 125-32.

²⁷⁶ A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* WBC 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), pp. 8-44; T. K. Abbot, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), pp. 6-9; A van Roon, *The Authenticity of Ephesians* trans S. Prescod-Jokel NovTSup 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 64-71.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Matt 13.35; 25.34; Lk 11.50; Heb 4.3; 9.26; Rev 13.8, where ἀπὸ instead of πρὸ is used.

Qumran sectaries.²⁷⁸ In addition to the above phrases and synonyms, the following are also noteworthy: ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (1.3); εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (1.6); κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (1.7); ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει (1.8). Thus as in the DSS, the language of prayer and worship is also dominant in Ephesians. Moreover, the author of Ephesians indicates that man is not only utterly dependent on divine will, but also on God's grace for election and salvation. Once considered 'strangers to the covenants of promise' (2.12; 2 Tim 1.9), they are now saved through God's grace in Jesus Christ (2.7-8), having been made 'fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God' (2.19).

However, there are differences between Ephesians and the DSS. For example, the effusive style of the author of Ephesians attempts to express his praise on the basis of a trinitarian pattern by giving thanks to God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Paul's understanding is based on his view of the law and his conviction that man is justified not by his efforts, but by grace through the unmerited gift in Jesus Christ (Rom 3.24). His view that the works required by the law are of no effect would not have been shared by the sectaries, who were strict in their interpretation of the law.

The NT writers also stress that while God desires to save people, based on their faith in Jesus Christ, God leaves each one with the choice of accepting or rejecting the gift of salvation. Everyone is responsible for his or her own destiny. For example, while Paul refers to the sovereign freedom of God to do as he pleases with his creation, the apostle also knew very well that election and predestination included human responsibility. Using Pharaoh as an example, Paul knew not only of God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart, but also of the monarch's part in resisting God, thus making him responsible for his actions (Rom 9.14-26).²⁷⁹ Matthew explains that only those who respond to the call become God's elect (Matt 22.14). As in the DSS, surrendering one's will to God does not take away the freedom to exercise one's will.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ K. G. Kuhn, 'The Epistle to the Ephesians in the Light of the Qumran Texts', in *Paul and Qumran*, pp. 115-31.

²⁷⁹ Cf. Exod 4.21; 7.3-4, 13; 8.15, 32; 9.12, 15-17, 34-35; 10.1, 20, 27; 11.9-10; 1 Sam 6.6.

²⁸⁰ E.g. Matt 7.24-27; 23.37; Rom 6.12-13; 14.10-12; 2 Cor 5.10; Rev 22.17.

5.5.5 Summary

In conclusion, it can be said that despite the deterministic elements in Essenism and Christianity, dualism in both groups is not couched in absolute terms. In both communities the principle of evil is not given an independent existence. The monotheistic outlook of both groups, in line with the ethos of Judaism and the concomitant belief in Yahweh's supreme sovereignty, led them to espouse a relative, qualified or modified dualism. Thus, underlying the dualism of both groups is the basic conviction that God is in full control of the created order, despite the apparent triumph of evil. In the final analysis God would intervene to end evil, and to establish his rule of righteousness. This naturally results in the preponderance of ethical ideas. However, in the dualistic beliefs of both communities, human existence is perceived as part of a cosmic warfare which would be resolved only by God in his own time.

The OT shows traces of the idea of two spirits – benevolent and malignant spirits – whose existence is attributed to God.²⁸¹ It is suggested that this may provide the background to the dualism in the DSS.²⁸² However, it is more likely that the apocalyptic mood of the Maccabean-Hasmonean period offers the matrix for the predestinarian emphasis in both Essenism and the early Church.²⁸³

5.6 Messianism

5.6.1 Messianism in Essenism

The messianic thrust of many of the Qumran documents has been overlooked by commentators, some of whom even argue against the sectaries' messianic outlook. Fitzmyer criticises scholars who dismiss the messianic beliefs of the sectaries, or fail to

²⁸¹ See, for example, Judges 14.6; 1 Sam 10.10; 16.14-16; 1 Kings 22.21-23; Num. 27.16.

²⁸² For suggestions of outside influence, presumably from Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Iran, and Hellenism, see Brown, 'The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 183-207.

²⁸³ F. M. Cross, *Library of Qumran*, pp. 198-99; H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls* trans E. T. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), pp. 55, 111-12; E. H. Merrill, *Qumran and Predestination: A Theological Study of the Thanksgiving Hymns* (Leiden: Brill, 1975). pp. 11-58.

treat clearly messianic titles which may represent different trends and beliefs. He argues that the DSS represent a stage in the development of Jewish beliefs when it is legitimate to speak of the coming of 'a/the Messiah' or even of 'the Messiahs'. He therefore urges that 'one should not water down the Qumran (messianic) expressions lest their import in recording phrases which reflect genuine messianic hopes among the Jews of the NT period be obscured'. He further suggests that the two messiahs must be recognised at some points because 'the texts do use the word מְשִׁיחַ as a substantive in the plural and not just as an adjective, and in an individual, not a collective sense'.²⁸⁴

In the DSS the evidence for the sect's teaching on messianism is not uniform, as J. Starcky's discussion has shown.²⁸⁵ While there are difficulties with Starcky's proposed four stages in the development of Qumran messianism – suggesting that differences in the time of writing may have been responsible for the different expressions in the DSS²⁸⁶ – it is, however, clear that several eschatological messianic figures and titles are mentioned, with varying degrees of prominence in the scrolls, particularly in the *Rule* books and in the *Pesharim*.²⁸⁷

5.6.1.1 *The Davidic Messiah*

A survey of the DSS for the sectaries' teaching on messianism yields interesting results. In the *Blessings of Jacob* (4QPBless, a commentary on Gen 49.10), there is a reference to the 'Messiah of Righteousness', the 'Branch of David', to whom (including his descendants) has been 'granted the Covenant of kingship over his people

²⁸⁴ Fitzmyer, 'The Aramaic 'Elect of God' Text from Qumran Cave 4', *CBQ* 27 (1965), 348-72. The verb anointed has been applied to a variety of figures in the OT, and not exclusively to the Davidic line (Isa 9.1-7; 11.1-10; 55.3-5; Micah 5.1-5; Jer 23.5-6; 33.15; Zech 9.9-10). Some of these include, the anointed priest (Exod 28.41; Lev 4.3, 5, 16; 8.12; 21.10); the anointing of Elisha by Elijah to be his successor (1 Kings 19.6; cf 1 Chron 16.22; Ps 105.16); the anointing of Saul and others to the royal office (1 Sam 10.1; 24.6); David (16.13); Hazael (1 Kings 19.15); Jehu (2 Kings 9.6); Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23.30); Cyrus, king of Persia (Isa 45.1). Cf. M. G. Abegg, Jr., 'The Messiah at Qumran: Are We Still Seeing Double?' *DSD* 2.2 (1985), 125-44.

²⁸⁵ Starcky, 'Les quatre étapes du messianisme à Qumran', *RB* 70 (1963), 481-505.

²⁸⁶ For a critique of Starcky's article, see R. E. Brown, 'J. Starcky's Theory of Qumran Messianic Development', *CBQ* 28 (1966), 51-7; Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), pp. 129-40.

²⁸⁷ VanderKam, 'Messianism in the Scrolls', in E. Ulrich and J. VanderKam eds., *Community*, pp. 211-34; J. J. Collins, 'Messianism in the Maccabean Period', in J. Neusner *et al.* eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), pp. 97-109.

for everlasting generations'.²⁸⁸ Allegro has noted the similarity between the Qumran use of the titles 'Messiah of Righteousness' (מֹשֶׁה יֵח הַצְדִּיק, 4QP Bless, line 3), or 'Teacher of Righteousness' (מֹרֶה הַצְדִּיק, or יוֹרֵה הַצְדִּיק (CD 6.6), and the NT application of the Melchizedek title of 'priest-king' (מֶלֶךְ יִצְחָק) as the prototype of Jesus, who was also thought to combine both functions'.²⁸⁹

Furthermore, in a recently published text from cave 4, the *Messiah of Heaven and Earth* (4Q521), there is a suggestion of a single, more nationalist, Davidic-style Messiah.²⁹⁰ He is portrayed in the manner of the supernatural Danielic figure (Dan 7) and in almost identical terms to the star prophecy of 1QM 11:

1. [...The Hea]vens and the earth will obey His Messiah.....6. Over the Meek will His Spirit hover, and the Faithful will He restore by His power. 7. He shall glorify the Pious Ones (*Hassidim*) on the Throne of the Eternal Kingdom. 8. He shall release the captives, make the blind to see, raise up the do[wn]trodden.] 11. And as for the wonders that are not the work of the Lord, when He...12. then He will heal the sick, resurrect the dead, and to the Meek announce glad tidings. 13. ...He will lead the [Holly] Ones; He will shepherd [th]em; He will do 14...and all of it...(frag 1 col 2 lines 1, 6-8, 11-14).²⁹¹

While the concept of the resurrection and immortality is discussed below, suffice it to say here that according to this text, the sectaries held a belief in the resurrection of the dead. There is also an allusion to Isa 61.1-2 (see also 29.18; 35.5-6), which seems to underlie much of the above text. It is not clear whether all the quoted lines refer to God or to the messiah, though lines 6-8 appear to refer to God. If the remaining lines refer to the messiah, who is mentioned in the opening line, then the imagery here moves closer to the similar NT citations (cf. Lk 4.18; Q=Matt 11.5-6//Lk 7.22-23).²⁹²

Another Qumran text of messianic significance is found in the commentaries on Isaiah discovered in cave 4 (4QpIsa^a=4Q161). This is paralleled by 4Q285. Both texts are fragmentary and share almost the same interpretation. A juxtaposition of both texts will highlight the similarity between them:

²⁸⁸ Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 260.

²⁸⁹ J. M. Allegro, 'Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature', *JBL* 75 (1956), 174-87.

²⁹⁰ Eisenman & Wise, *Scrolls Uncovered*, pp. 19-23.

²⁹¹ Eisenman & Wise, *Scrolls Uncovered*, pp. 21-23.

²⁹² See §8.6.1. Attempts have been made to identify this messianic figure: Puech proposes that he is a royal messiah, while Collins suggests that he is an 'anointed eschatological prophet, either Elijah or a prophet like Elijah'. E. Puech, 'Messianism, Resurrection, and Eschatology at Qumran and in the New Testament', in Ulrich & VanderKam eds., *Community*, pp. 235-56; Collins, 'He Shall not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls', *DSD* 2.2 (1995), 145-64.

[and the tallest tre]es [shall be cut down and] the lofty [shall be felled] with the axe, and Lebanon through a powerful one (בְּאִדִּיר) shall fall (x, 33-34)...[And that which he said, The tallest] trees shall be cut down, these are the valiant of the Kit[tim]...[And that which he said, The heart of the forest shall be felled with the axe, th[ey]...for the war of the Kittim. And Lebanon through a po[werful one (בְּאִדִּיר) shall fall (x, 34). Its interpretation concerns the] Kittim who will be given into the hand of his great one...when he flees from be[fore Is]rael...(4Q161 frags 8-10 lines 1b-9).

1...Isaiah the Prophet, [The thickets of the forest] will be fell[ed with an axe] 2. [and Lebanon shall f]all [by a mighty one {בְּאִדִּיר}] A staff shall rise from the root of Jesse, [and a Planting from his roots will bear fruit.'] 3...the Branch of David....4. and they will put to death the Leader of the Community, the Bran[ch of David] {צִמְחָה} (this might also be read, depending on the context, 'and the Leader of the Community, the Bran[ch of David]', will put him to death) (4Q285 frag 7 lines 1-4).²⁹³

4Q161 is an extended pesher on Isaiah 10.23-11.5. The sectaries apply this Isaianic prophecy to their eschatological war against the Kittim, which is fought and won under the command of the Davidic Messiah, referred to as the 'Branch' which grows out of the stem of Jesse.²⁹⁴ The Isaianic passage, according to 4Q161, may be divided into the following units: Isa 10.23-27 – here the Lord remembers his people, the remnant, and promises to protect them from their enemies by the hand of his messiah; verses 28-32 offer a description of the messiah's campaign which eventually results in a confrontation with the enemies, the Kittim, at Jerusalem; and verses 33-34 may refer to the actual battle in which the Kittim are put to rout.

The specific interpretation of verse 34b, which in the MT also reads 'and Lebanon shall fall by a powerful one' is not clear, though the suggestion has been made that בְּאִדִּיר (through a powerful one) may refer to the 'Prince of the Congregation' and 'Lebanon' to the king of Kittim.²⁹⁵ Notice, however, that 4QpIsa^a interprets this as the Kittim who will be given into the hand of 'his great one' (גְּדוֹלָה). The suffix may suggest that this is a reference to God's great one, his messiah.²⁹⁶ This conclusion is supported by the sectaries' interpretation of Isa 11.1-4a as a reference to

²⁹³ Eisenman & Wise, *Scrolls Uncovered*, p. 29.

²⁹⁴ Vermes, 'The Oxford Forum for Qumran Research on the Rule of War from Cave 4 (4Q285)', *JJS* 43 (1991), 85-90.

²⁹⁵ Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* SPB 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1961), p. 27.

²⁹⁶ Vermes, 'Oxford Forum', 85-90.

the Davidic Messiah, who is empowered by the Spirit of the Lord to win the battle described in 10.33-34.

The phrase 'and they will put to death the Leader of the Community, the Bran[ch of David]' (4Q285, line 4) has spawned a variety of interpretations. Some propose that it should be understood as 'the Prince of the Congregation put (or shall put) him [i.e. the enemy leader] to death'.²⁹⁷ The fragmentary nature of the text means that any interpretation must remain conjectural. According to Vermes, the text appears to be presented as a fulfilment of the messianic prophecy in Isa 11.1-5, where the messiah slays the wicked 'with the breath of his lips'.²⁹⁸ Besides the close affinity between the sectaries and the early Church in the application of identical messianic categories to key figures in both communities (cf. Acts 13.16-41), we need to establish whether the messianic categories employed in the DSS refer to one or multiple messianic figures. In order to gain a better perspective on the interconnections between the various messianic figures in the DSS, we now take a look at the Interpreter of the law, the messiahs of Aaron, Israel and the prophet.

5.6.1.2 *The Interpreter of the Law*

In the interpretation of the oracle of Nathan in 4QFlor, two figures are mentioned: the shoot of David – apparently a messianic figure, for the biblical text (2 Sam 7.10-14a) is interpreted to refer to a messiah from the line of David – and the Interpreter of the law. Even though 4QFlor offers no further description of the interpreter of the law other than that he would appear with the shoot of David in the latter days, he is portrayed as an eschatological figure:

The Lord declares to you that He will build you a House (2 Sam. vii, 11c). I will raise up your seed after you (2 Sam. vii, 12). I will establish the throne of his kingdom [for ev]er (2 Sam. vii, 13). I [will be] his father and he shall be my son (2 Sam. vii, 14). He is the Branch of David who shall arise with the Interpreter of the Law [to rule] in Zion [at the end] of time. As it is written, I will raise up the tent of David that is fallen (Amos ix, 11). That is to say, the fallen tent of David is he who shall arise to save Israel (4Q174 [frags 1-3] I.10-13).

²⁹⁷ E. M. Cook, *Solving the Mysteries of the Dead Sea Scrolls: New Light on the Bible* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), p. 161.

²⁹⁸ Vermes, 'Oxford Forum', 85-90.

Furthermore, in CD 7.18 the Interpreter of the law is mentioned together with the prince of the congregation: 'The *star* is the Interpreter of the law who shall come to Damascus; as it is written, *A star shall come forth out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel* (Num. xxiv, 17). The *sceptre* is the Prince of the whole congregation, and when he comes *he shall smite all the children of Seth*' (cf. CD 6.7).²⁹⁹ This passage suggests that the sectaries envisaged the coming of an eschatological figure known as the Interpreter of the law, and that he would not come alone.

It has been plausibly argued that the Interpreter of the law may be identified with the priestly messiah, who is possibly the prophet who would come in the last days. According to the commentary on Habakkuk, he is the revered Teacher of Righteousness, who has been privy to the mysteries concerning the last days which God has not even revealed to the prophet Habakkuk himself (1QpHab 2.8-10; 7.1-5a; cf. CD 1.11; 6.7-8).³⁰⁰

5.6.1.3 *The Messiahs of Aaron, Israel and the Prophet*

Some parts of the DSS anticipate the coming of the messiahs of Aaron and Israel (CD 12.23; 14.19; 19.10-11; 20.1; cf. 2.12; 6.1), though elsewhere reference is made to one messiah only, the 'Messiah of Israel' (1QSa 2.12, 14, 20). In 1QS 9.9b-11 the community members are admonished to stick to the law and the primitive precepts by which they were initially instructed 'until there shall come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel'.³⁰¹ Similarly, the author of CD 1.7-8 notes that God has visited his people to cause 'a plant root to spring from Israel and Aaron to inherit His land and to prosper on the good things of His earth'. This is followed in 2.12b by the statement

²⁹⁹ The *Genesis Florilegium* also ends up with an exposition of another famous messianic prophecy based on Gen 49.10, which refers to the sceptre aspect of the prophecy in Num 24.17. See Eisenman & Wise, *Scrolls Uncovered*, pp. 77-89.

³⁰⁰ For further discussion on the link between the Interpreter of the law, the Priestly Messiah and the Teacher of Righteousness, see Allegro, 'Further Messianic References', 174-6; Stendahl, 'The Scrolls and the New Testament: An Introduction and a Perspective', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 1-17; Knibb, *Qumran Community*, pp. 49, 261; Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran*, pp. 197-205.

³⁰¹ The concept of two messiahs, one from Levi/Aaron and one from Judah/Israel is found in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which were highly valued by the Essenes. See H. C. Kee, 'Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs', *OTP* 1.775-828.

that God has 'made known His Holy Spirit to them by the hand of His anointed Ones', which suggests multiple messiahs.

It has been proposed, on the basis of redactional studies, that CD in its pre-Qumran form probably referred to a single messiah, a messiah of Aaron, who may have been an anointed high priest with special eschatological status. It is even suggested that CD did not originally refer to Qumran, but offered an ideological statement of a group, some of whose members later joined the Qumran community.³⁰² However, according to Collins, it is possible that 1QS 9.9-11 originally referred to two messiahs and that the references to a single messiah of Aaron and Israel are either secondary in CD, or that CD merged the messiahs of Aaron and Israel into one, but then, perhaps at a later stage, reintroduced the royal, warrior-like messiah. Collins suggests that it is 'simpler to suppose that the phrase "messiah of Aaron and Israel" envisaged two messiahs throughout'.³⁰³ This dyarchy of priestly and kingly messiahs has antecedents in the OT (e.g. Gen 49.10-12; Ps 2.2, 6; 89; 110; Zech 3.8; 6.12-13). It is therefore likely that Qumran expected at least two messiahs.³⁰⁴

In 11QMelchizedek there is reference to the mysterious priestly/prophetic figure of Mechizedek, who acts as a mediator or forerunner of God's offer of liberty, restoration and redemption to the captives 'for the last days' (11QMelch II.4, 6, 25).³⁰⁵ In this text, which strings together a number of biblical verses with commentary, Melchizedek is portrayed as an angel who presides over God's vengeance on 'Belial and the spirits of his lot' (11QMelch II.12-13).³⁰⁶

The *Testimonia* (4Q175), sometimes referred to as *A Messianic Anthology* because a large part of it consists of a collection of testimonies or messianic proof-texts,

³⁰² Brooke, 'The Messiah of Aaron in the Damascus Document', *RQ* 15 (1991), 215-30. L. D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* SNTSMS 65 (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), pp. 47-48 also questions the idea of multiple messianism in the DSS.

³⁰³ Collins, 'He Shall not Judge by What His Eyes See', 145-64; VanderKam, 'Jubilees and the Priestly-Messiah of Qumran', *RevQ* 13 (1988), 353-65; K. G. Kuhn, 'The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 54-64; Rowley, *The Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran*. The Second Montefiore Lecture, University of Southampton (London: Camelot Press, 1958), p. 11.

³⁰⁴ Talmon, *World of Qumran*, pp. 287-93 for further discussion and bibliography.

³⁰⁵ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 139.

³⁰⁶ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 140.

also sheds some light on the Qumran sectaries' messianic beliefs. First, like the CD, it also contains prophecies about the expectation of a prophet like Moses:

I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren. I will put my words into his mouth and he shall tell them all that I command him. And I will require a reckoning of whoever will not listen to the words which the Prophet shall speak in my Name (Deut. xviii, 18-19) (4Q175.5-8).

Secondly, it applies part of the oracle of Balaam (Num 24.15-17) to the expected royal or Davidic messiah:

A star shall come out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; he shall crush the temples of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth (Num xxiv, 15-17) (4Q175.12b-13).

Thirdly, it provides a confirmation, though implicitly, of the expectation of a priestly messiah through the blessings of the Levites (4Q175.14-21).³⁰⁷

1QSa makes it clear that the priestly messiah took precedence over the lay messiah or prince of Israel, just as in the hierarchy of the community the priests were superior to the laity (1QSa 2.11b-22). The pre-eminence of the priestly messiah of Aaron is further attested in 1QS where during the communal meals, as a vision of the eschatological heavenly banquet, no one is allowed to touch any part of the bread and the wine before the priest (1QS 6.4-6).³⁰⁸

5.6.1.4 *The Son of God*

Another eschatological messianic figure is the 'Son of God' (4Q246 I and II). The rule of this 'Son of the most High' will be an eternal one, as against the transitoriness of earthly kingdoms. The language used here is reminiscent of Dan. 2.44 and Luke 21.10-28 where Jesus foretells the woes preceding the destruction of Jerusalem:

I) 1..And when the Spirit] came to rest upo[n] him, he fell before the throne. 2. [Then Daniel arose and said,] 'O [k]ing, why are you angry; why do you [grind] your teeth? 3. [The G]reat [God] has revealed to you [that which is to come.]...4 ...Oppression will be upon the earth. 5. [Peoples will make war,] and battles shall multiply among the nations, 6. [until the King of the people of God arises.. 7. [All the peoples will serve him,]and he shall become [gre]at upon the earth. 8 [...All w]ill make [peace,] and all will serve 9. [him.] He will be called [son the Gr]eat [God;] by His Name he shall be designated.

³⁰⁷ Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 296.

³⁰⁸ The pre-eminence of the priestly office over the kingly office is attested in *Test Jud* 21.1-5.

II) 1. He will be called the son of God; they will call him son of the Most High. Like the shooting stars... 5. His Kingdom will be an Eternal Kingdom, and he will be Righteous in all his Ways. He [will jud]ge 6. the earth in Righteousness, and everyone will make peace. The sword shall cease from the earth, 7. and every nation will bow down to him... 9...His rule will be an Eternal rule...³⁰⁹

It has been suggested that the 'son of God' does not bring peace or redemption, but is preceded by distress and destruction. Consequently, the title is understood as a reference to one of the Greek despots who oppressed the Jews. According to Flusser, the title alludes to the anti-Christ, or an evil despot, who demanded deification shortly before the intervention of God in the last days.³¹⁰ However, Fitzmyer is of the view that the epithet refers to 'a son of some enthroned king, possibly an heir to the Davidic throne'.³¹¹ Similarly, Martínez, Vermes and Collins propose that the term alludes to the archangel Michael, or the royal Davidic messiah, who mediates God's salvation.³¹² However, Eisenman and Wise have rightly pointed out that the war-like outlook of the messianic figure portrayed above, 'whether taken figuratively or otherwise, is in line with the general uncompromising, militant and nationalist ethos of the Qumran corpus; the Messianic figure was to be a triumphant, quasi-nationalist king figure'.³¹³

5.6.2 *Messianism in the Early Church*

Does Qumran messianism offer us the conceptual background of the later messianic and Christological understanding of the early Church? Stendahl has proposed that both the early Church and the Essenes were messianic communities since life in both communities was conceived in the framework of promise and fulfilment. The difference between the two, he observes, lies in the fact that the expected messiah of the Christians had already come, lived, died and triumphed over death, whereas the covenanters looked forward to two or three messiahs none of whom had yet lived on earth as messiah. The sectaries expected the Teacher of Righteousness 'to be raised as

³⁰⁹ Eisenman & Wise, *Scrolls Uncovered*, pp. 68-71. See also Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 275.

³¹⁰ Flusser, *Judaism*, pp. 207-13.

³¹¹ Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 90-93, 106.

³¹² Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 173; Vermes, 'Qumran Forum Miscellanea I', *JJS* 43 (1992), 162-79; Collins, 'He Shall not Judge by What His Eyes See', 145-64.

³¹³ Eisenman & Wise, *Scrolls Uncovered*, p. 69.

the priestly Messiah together with the Anointed One of Israel'. Thus the main difference between the two sects 'is one of messianology/christology'.³¹⁴

While there are differences between the two communities, it is, however, instructive to note that just as the sectaries did not effectively believe that the Teacher of Righteousness was a messiah during his life time, so for the early Church the resurrection and ascension of Jesus made all the difference for their understanding of Jesus' messiahship. Furthermore, all the messianic figures referred to in the DSS find their parallels in the early Church. The mention of the prophet is paralleled by Jesus' association with Moses and Elijah at his transfiguration (Mk 9.1-13 and par; cf. 4Q521; Ben Sira 48.1-15). Further references to Jesus' prophetic status include Mk 6.14-16; 8.27-30 and par; Lk 7.16; John 1.21; 6.14, cf. Deut 18.15, 18-19; Acts 7.37. Moreover, the expectation of the coming of Elijah and of the messiahs at the end of days in the DSS may underlie the general presentation of John as the expected prophet in Mk 1.1-8 and par (cf. Lk 1.16-17 and Q=Matt 11.7-9//Lk 7.24-26).³¹⁵

The concept of the Davidic messiah in the NT is similar to that noted in the DSS. Jesus' messianic role, his Davidic descent and his future kingship find expression in the NT. He accepted the messianic title publicly and privately in Mk 14.61-62 (cf. Matt 2.1-2; Mk 15.18, 26 and par; John 19.2-3, 21) and Matt 16.13-20 respectively, though he rejected the element of armed rebellion and vengeance against the Gentile despots seen in the DSS. However, Jesus' messiahship transcends his Davidic descent (Mk 12.35-37; cf. Acts 13.22-23, 32), and the messianic roles described in the DSS.³¹⁶

The experience on the road to Emmaus portrays Jesus as the interpreter of the law and prophets. According to Luke, Jesus expounded the scriptures to Cleopas and the unnamed disciple as they sought to understand the mysterious events surrounding his resurrection (Lk 24.13-27).³¹⁷

³¹⁴ Stendahl, 'The Scrolls and the Testament: An Introduction and a Perspective' in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 1-17.

³¹⁵ Puech, 'Messianism, Resurrection, and Eschatology at Qumran and in the New Testament', in Ulrich & VanderKam eds., *Community*, pp. 235-56.

³¹⁶ See M. L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* JSNTSup 110 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995).

³¹⁷ See §5.3.2.

The enigmatic figure of Melchizedek in 11QMelch may also enhance our understanding of the Melchizedek figure in the NT, where he is referred to as one of the ancient priest-kings to whose order Jesus belongs. In Heb 6.20-7.3 the author writes that Jesus is ἀρχιερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ and shows the eternity and superiority of this priesthood to the Levitical order in light of a synthesis of Gen 14.18-20 and Ps 110.4. In Heb 7.3 the ancient and everlasting order of Melchizedek is made to conform to the new priestly order of Jesus, the Son of God (ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές). Here the priesthood of Jesus transcends even the order of Melchizedek.³¹⁸

In 11QMelch, Melchizedek is portrayed as the heavenly deliverer identical with the archangel Michael (though the latter figure is not explicitly mentioned in the text). He is referred to as *elohim* and *el* (11QMelch II.24-25). As an angelic warrior, one of his roles is to 'proclaim liberty to the captives' by bringing together the 'holy ones of God', and to execute judgment and divine vengeance on Belial and the 'spirits of his lot'. In carrying out this task, Melchizedek is assisted by other angels (11QMelch II.4-6, 8, 13-14).³¹⁹ In this role, Melchizedek is presented in language of extraordinary superhuman strength beyond the OT wording, but reminiscent of Heb 7.³²⁰ The Qumran text helps us to understand better the background of the NT reference to this enigmatic figure, though 11QMelch is not so much interested in the high-priesthood of Melchizedek as in his role as God's warrior.³²¹

There are also clear parallels and allusions to the eschatological messianic figure, the Son of God (4Q246), in the Lucan infancy narratives. For example, 'He will be great, and will be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end;... therefore the child to be born will be called the holy

³¹⁸ For further discussion, see F. L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the 5th Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: CUP, 1976); M. Delcor, 'Melchizedek from Genesis to the Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews', *JSJ* 2 (1971), 115-35.

³¹⁹ Martínez, *DSST*, pp. 139-40.

³²⁰ M. de Jonge & A. S. van der Woude, '11QMelchizedek and the New Testament', *NTS* 12 (1966), 301-26.

³²¹ See §6.4.4 for further discussion.

Son of God' (Lk 1.32-35; cf. 2 Sam 7.14; Ps 2.7; 89.27). The evidence from this text raises an important question concerning the sources used by Luke for the first two chapters of his Gospel.³²² Riesner has recently resurrected the thesis that Luke's special tradition goes back to conservative Jewish Christians in Judea. He shows that there are not only linguistic but also structural parallels between parts of the Lucan special tradition and the DSS. The poetic style of the hymns in the Lucan infancy narrative has been shown to resemble that of 1QH.³²³

Furthermore, 4Q246 throws some light on the blasphemy charge levelled against Jesus by the Jews when he claimed the title 'Son of God' (John 10.33, 36; cf. 3.16). This understanding lies behind the high priest's question, Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ; (Mk 14.61-65 and par).

It should, however, be noted that the picture of the messianic figure painted in the text of the Son of God (4Q246) is one of a military warrior as against the Christian picture of a lowly and humble messiah. Nevertheless, this difference should not be stressed too far. We have observed above that, in spite of the war-like nature of the Qumran messiah, he, too, is presented as a lowly and humble figure. Moreover, the disciples of Jesus did at some stage entertain the idea that he was going to establish a political kingdom in which they would hold the positions of honour (Mk 10.35-45; Matt 16.21-22; Lk 9.46-48). There is also reference in the Lucan infancy narratives to the 'Son of the Most High' defeating his enemies (Lk 2.34-35).

5.6.3 *Summary*

The above analysis demonstrates the similarities and differences between Qumran messianism and NT Christology. Apart from the observation that almost all the messianic titles encountered in the DSS find expression in the NT, Qumran messianism

³²² N. Turner, 'The Relation of Luke i and ii to Hebraic Sources and to the Rest of Luke-Acts', *NTS* 2 (1955-56), 100-9; P. Winter, 'Some Observations on the Language in the Birth and Infancy Stories of the Third Gospel', *NTS* 1 (1954-55), 111-21.

³²³ Riesner, 'Luke's Special Tradition and the Question of a Hebrew Gospel Source', *Mishkhan* 20 (1994), 44-51; Cook, *Mysteries*, pp. 155-56; R. Buth, 'Hebrew Poetic Tenses and the Magnificat', *JSNT* 21 (1984), 67-83. See also §7.4.

also enhances our understanding of NT Christology. More significantly, both Qumran and NT understanding of the Melchizedek figure go beyond that of the OT.

Our study has further indicated that both Qumran and early Christianity developed a philosophy of messianism which was both spiritual and political. With a conceptual framework which was based on the OT, the Qumran sectaries developed a dualistic interpretation of the messianic office: on the one hand it was priestly, and on the other regal, with the prophet preceding both messianic figures. To appreciate the Qumran messianic conceptions both figures must be taken together, for one would be ineffective without the other. The priestly office involved some element of suffering and humiliation, while the regal called for exemplary qualities of organisation and conquest. Both conceptions can be postulated for the early Church's messianic interpretations.

However, there is a distinctive difference between Qumran and NT messianism: the early Church hailed Jesus as the messiah by virtue of his death and resurrection, whereas the sectaries still looked forward to the imminent arrival of their messiahs.

5.7 Resurrection and Immortality

5.7.1 Resurrection and Immortality in Essenism

Scholarly discussion of the Qumran sectaries' concept of immortality has been sporadic, while the idea of the resurrection of the body has remained relatively unknown. According to R. B. Laurin, the sectaries had no doctrine regarding the afterlife.³²⁴ Mansoor also writes: 'Members of the sect were unconcerned with the resurrection of the body because they expected the universal judgment to occur during their own time. Nor was resurrection foreseen, but an assumption of the body, sanctified and purified through the ritual of the sect, was expected.'³²⁵ Statements in the DSS which give an indication of the sectaries' belief in the immortality of the soul have been cited to support this (e.g. 1QS 4.7, 12-13).

³²⁴ Laurin, 'The Question of Immortality in the Qumran "Hodayot"', *JSS* 3 (1958), 344-55.

³²⁵ M. Mansoor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A College Textbook and a Study Guide* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 108.

Furthermore, scholars have been baffled by the apparent contradictory statements in the classical sources regarding the sectaries' belief in these two distinct, though not mutually exclusive, concepts of the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul. For example, according to Josephus, the sectaries regarded the body as the temporary and perishable prison-house of the immortal soul. At death, the soul is liberated from the body:

For it is a fixed belief of theirs that the body is corruptible and its constituent matter impermanent, but that the soul is immortal and imperishable. Emanating from the finest ether, these souls become entangled, as it were, in the prison-house of the body, to which they are dragged down by a sort of natural spell; but when once they are released from the bonds of the flesh, then, they rejoice and are borne aloft.³²⁶

Hippolytus' account, which is substantially the same in content as that of Josephus, offers some fresh insights which are not found in Josephus:

Now the dogma (word) of the resurrection also is firmly held among them. For they confess that the flesh also will arise and be immortal as the soul is already immortal, which they now say, when separated from the body, enters a place of fragrant air and light, to rest until the judgment....for they say that there will be a judgment and a conflagration of everything, and that the wicked will be eternally punished.³²⁷

The problem that has exercised scholars is whether Josephus ascribed to the Essenes a neo-Pythagorean view of immortality or whether Hippolytus conformed his account to Christian ideas. In spite of the trustworthiness of Josephus' account of Jewish history, we have noted his tendency to idealise the beliefs and customs of his own people to Greek thought in his writings, in many cases emphasising the similarities while minimising the dissimilarities.³²⁸ For example, in his treatment of the Pharisees' concept of the resurrection, Josephus tends to overemphasise their view of the immortality of the soul – a doctrine very similar to the Greeks' – but hardly mentions their concept of the bodily resurrection.³²⁹

The recent publication of 4Q521 (col 2, lines 6-8, 11-13),³³⁰ in which there is a reference to the bodily resurrection, or the unification of the body and soul of the dead,

³²⁶ *War* 2.154-55.

³²⁷ *Refutation* 9.27. See Black, *Scrolls and Christian Origins*, pp. 187-91.

³²⁸ See §§3.4-3.5.

³²⁹ *Ant.* 18.13-14.

³³⁰ See §5.6.1 above.

vindicates the account of Hippolytus (if indeed he had this sect in mind when he wrote about the Essenes), indicating that he has been faithful to his source. Moreover, the *Hodayot* suggests a bodily resurrection: 'Hoist a bannner, O you who lie in the dust! O bodies gnawed by worms, raise up an ensign...!' (1QH 4.34-35).

Some of the Aramaic texts also envision a bodily resurrection. For example, the *Testament of Qahat* (4Q542 col II.3-8) refers to the eternal blessings for the righteous at the time of the great judgment, when they 'will rise to make judgment and to see the sin of all the sinners of the world' (see also 4QVisions of Amram^f (4Q548 1-16)).³³¹ Moreover, in some of the pseudepigrapha books known and copied at Qumran, there are allusions to the resurrection that is associated with the restoration of Israel (e.g. the *Epistle of Enoch* 91.10-11; 92.3-4; 100.5; 102.4-5). The sectaries also treasured the Book of Daniel, which features the hope of resurrection (Dan 12.2).³³²

As Eisenman and Wise rightly point out, the reference to the sectaries' belief in a resurrection should not unduly surprise us 'as the belief seems to have been a fixture of the Maccabean Uprisings as reflected in 2 Macc 12:44-45 and Dan 12.2 growing in strength as it came down to first-century groups claiming descent from these archetypal events'.³³³

5.7.2 *Resurrection and Immortality in the Early Church*

The OT does not have an explicit doctrine of the resurrection of the dead or of immortality. In fact apart from the general resurrection (Dan 12.2), the assumption of Enoch into heaven before death (Gen 5.24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2.9-11), there are no obvious references to the afterlife, though there are hints or allusions to corporate preservation under the guidance of Yahweh (cf. Hosea 6.1-6; 13.14; Micah 2.1-13). Yahweh's blessings for the righteous and punishment for the ungodly specifically relate to the present life (e.g. Prov 3.5-8; 13.6-9; Isa 10.1-4).

³³¹ Martínez, DSST, pp. 272, 275.

³³² It is unlikely that they rejected the Danielic hope of the resurrection, as H. H. Rowley suggests. —*The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1964), pp. 9-10.

³³³ Eisenman & Wise, *Scrolls Uncovered*, p. 21.

It is in the intertestamental literature that the themes of immortality and resurrection come to full expression (e.g. 2 Macc 7.7-14; 12.42-44; Ben Sira 17.28-30; 19.19; *Test Jud* 25.4; *Test Benj* 10.6-9, 4 Ezra 4.41-43; 7.32-38; 2 *Apoc Bar* 49.2; 51.2-12; 85.13). Even here there is no uniformity of view regarding the afterlife, and the connection between immortality and physical resurrection.

However, there is a significant parallel between 4Q521 and the concept of a bodily resurrection in the NT. In lines 12-13 the messiah is to heal the sick, resurrect the dead, announce glad tidings to the meek and lead the holy ones like a shepherd. Jesus' preaching as recorded by the synoptic Evangelists presupposes a doctrine of the resurrection. Jesus refers to the resurrection of the dead in his response to John's question recorded in Q (Matt 11.2-6//Lk 7.18-21). Against the Sadducean opposition to the doctrine of resurrection (*War* 2.165; *Ant* 18.16), Jesus differentiates between this life and the resurrected life, where there will be no marriage (Mk 12.18-27 and par). Jesus further speaks of a resurrection of the righteous to eternal bliss and the wicked to torment (Lk 14.14; Matt 8.11-12; 25.31-46 cf. Lk 13.28-30).

In John's Gospel, the Son of Man is the agent who bestows life on those who believe on him. This bestowal of life can be experienced now as well as in the future life (John 5.24-29; 11.24-26 cf. 20.19-20, 26-27; 21.15).

Paul also refers to the future resurrection of believers to salvation, and destruction for the ungodly (Phil 3.10-11, 18-21; 1 Cor 15.12-20, 51-55; 2 Cor 5.10; 1 Thess 4.15-17). Furthermore, Paul conceives of resurrection as a transformation of the individual believer (Rom 8.19-23; 2 Cor 5.15-17; 1 Cor 15.36-50). There are other non-Pauline passages where resurrection is mentioned in connection with the believer (Heb 6.2; 11.19; 1 Pet 1.3-4, 21; Rev 20.5-6).

However, as in the discussion on Messianism above, here, too, the main difference lies with the distinctive NT idea of the resurrected Jesus as the agent who guarantees and bestows the gifts of the resurrection and immortality on the believer. So far this idea has no parallel in the DSS.

We conclude, then, that the concept of the resurrection and immortality was not unknown to the Essenes, though its clearest expression is found in other literature of the intertestamental period. More interestingly, our study has pointed out the close affinity between the doctrine of the resurrection found in the NT and 4Q521.

5.8 Conclusion

Our study has shown the complex similarities between Essenism and early Christianity, in terms of their common conceptions in the use of scripture, eschatology, messianism and resurrection. It is possible that these ideas reflect widespread Jewish thinking prior to the Christian era. However, the DSS make their proper contribution to our understanding of the background to these concepts in the NT.

Through their hermeneutical principles and exegetical procedures, both the sectaries and the early Christians, in particular the Johannine community, shared the common features of sectarian communities. Their discontent with mainstream Judaism found expression in the burning conviction that they alone had the truth. There was the need for both groups to justify the cause of their dissatisfaction with the status quo to themselves and, if possible, to others on rational grounds. Both the sectaries and the early Christians employed Isa 40.3 to justify their separation into the wilderness, and to support the ministry of John as the forerunner of Jesus respectively. The use of scripture in the form of proof-texts was common to both communities, in order to justify their unique positions as the elect and recipients of the new covenant. However, while the Essenes were scrupulously concerned with the observance of the Torah, Jesus and his followers were more concerned with the moral and religious significance of the Torah, though conscious of its legal claims. Generally, both communities shared the historical rather than the allegorical approach to biblical interpretation.

Other linguistic and conceptual parallels include the dualism of the two spirits. Particularly striking is the remarkable affinity between the DSS and the Johannine corpus, with its strong dualistic notion of the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Here two conclusions were drawn: (i) the dualism of the two spirits may lie behind the warning against the false christs and false prophets who would mislead members of the Christian community. As in the DSS, the spirit of falsehood is destined for destruction at the eschaton; and (ii) the dualism of the NT can be explained on the basis of the apocalyptic background of second temple Judaism, rather than on the basis of Hellenism or Gnostic dualism.

Both the early Christian and Qumran communities saw themselves as the elect of God, foreordained by God as part of the covenant relationship established with the patriarchs. However, neither of them held to the concept of absolute determinism. Both believed in man's freedom of choice, and his ability to make ethical decisions, especially in choosing between the two spirits which seek constantly to control him.

Further parallels have been noted between the messianic conceptions of Essenism and the early Church. Jesus is described as the Davidic kingly messiah, a prophet-like Moses, a priest in the order of Melchizedek, the expositor of the law of Moses and the prophets, and the Son of God. Both developed a philosophy of messianism which was both spiritual and political from a conceptual framework based primarily on the OT, though Jesus' messiahship is more profound and infuses the idea with more content and emphasis. In both situations, the priestly office involved some elements of suffering and humiliation, while the regal office was modelled on the notion of conquest.

Finally, our investigation has shown that both communities held to the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. The evidence from the DSS shows that many of the ideas in the NT that have been traced and explained in light of Hellenistic sources were well known in Judaism, and presumably to other Jewish groups of the second temple period. We, therefore, conclude that the OT and Jewish apocalyptic of the second temple period (represented by the DSS), provide the matrix for the NT ideas considered above.

6. WORSHIP

6.1 Introduction

The attitude of the Qumran Essenes and the early Church to the Jerusalem temple and official worship appears to overlap. It is understandable that two religious communities emerging from a common religious heritage and compelled, for various reasons, to regard themselves as separatist movements should express an understanding of their distinctive character in terms which derive from their common religious heritage. It is quite possible that as the earlier of the two communities, the Qumran sect contributed some of the terminology and motifs by which the early Church understood its distinctive character.

We have noted above that a fundamental reason for the sectaries' separation from mainstream Judaism was to establish a community based largely on a degree of holiness and purity which would meet God's approval. According to them, this could be attained by a detailed observance of the regulations of the Torah. In this chapter we shall argue that the Essenes' concentration on holiness, expressed in a variety of regulations concerning ceremonial purity and an intense exclusiveness, should be seen in the light of their ideology of personal and corporate piety.³³⁴

6.2 Temple Symbolism

6.2.1 *Temple Symbolism in Essenism*

The Qumran sectaries regarded themselves as the people of the new covenant, the elect, the remnant, the true Israel and the choice possession of God, sanctified to be a foundation of holiness for all Israel (1QS 11.7-9a).³³⁵

³³⁴ Lehne, *New Covenant*, pp. 35-46.

³³⁵ CD 6.19; 8.21; 19.343-34; 20.12; 1QS 1-2; 3.15-17a; 1QpHab 2.3.

In line with the worship of God offered through a life of holiness, the sectaries were punctilious to perform the rituals prescribed by the Torah. The holiness code demanded that sacrifices be offered by priests from the line of Aaron. The Qumran community was composed of priests and laity, the former having considerably greater authority.³³⁶ The evidence seems to suggest that the founders of the community were originally part of the temple priests in Jerusalem.³³⁷ According to them, the cultus and its holiness had become degenerate. It was this corruption of the official cultus which precipitated their departure from Jerusalem, its spiritual centre, for the wilderness. These foundational and hereditary priests—and many of such priests were later to join the Qumran community, like JB—were frequently referred to as 'the sons of Zadok' (בְּנֵי צָדוֹק), or occasionally, as 'the sons of Aaron' (בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן).³³⁸

Both priests and laity were enjoined to observe Levitical purity.³³⁹ There is a catalogue of physical blemishes which excluded both priests and lay people from either serving in the community, or from full membership respectively. For example, CD 15.15 stipulates that 'No madman, or lunatic, or simpleton, or fool, no blind man, or maimed, or lame, or deaf man, and no minor, shall enter into the Community, for the Angels of Holiness are with them' (cf. 1QSa 2.3b-10).

The above concern for purity may be explained by the sectaries' perception of themselves as the temple. In fact one of the fundamental elements in the temple symbolism of the Qumran community was the burning conviction that the presence of God no longer resided in the Jerusalem temple which had been defiled by the wicked

³³⁶ B. Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the New Testament* SNTSMS 1 (Cambridge: CUP Press, 1965), pp. 4-15.

³³⁷ Teicher in his 'Priests and Sacrifices in the Dead Sea Scrolls', *JJS* 5 (1954), 93-99, fails to see any connection between the temple priests and Qumran. He argues that the references to the temple, the priests and the sacrifice in the Qumran texts are to be understood in a metaphorical sense.

³³⁸ 1QSa 1.23-24; 2.3, 13. Cf. 2 Sam 8.17; 15.24-37; 20.25; 1 Kings 1.1-2.27; 1 Chron 31.10; Ezek 40.46; 44.10-16. For further discussion of the connection of name Zadok with the Essenes, see P. R. Davies, *Behind the Essenes: History and Ideology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 51-72; G. Klinzing, *Die Umdeutung des Kultus in der Qumrangemeinde und im Neuen Testament* SUNT 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 132-42.

³³⁹ Distinction between the sons of Zadok as priests and the laity (often referred to as men of the Covenant) occurs in other parts of the Essene literature: 1QSa 1.2, 24; 2.3; 1QSB 3.22; 4QFlor 1.17. Note also that the Levites appear to stand in an inferior relationship to the priests as they do in the temple services (1QS 2; 1QSa 2). Occasionally a Levite may be elevated to or over a hereditary priest (CD 13).

priest (1QpHab 8.8-13), but in the pure remnant of Israel, which was the community. However, the community did not consider itself to have parted completely with the temple cultus in all its forms. In fact, the sectaries looked forward to an actual temple at the end of time, and the *Temple Scroll* (11QT) gives a blueprint for this temple.³⁴⁰ Rather, they transferred the whole complex of ideas from the Jerusalem temple to the community. This, of course, meant that some kind of 'spiritualization' had to take place, since the temple worship was now performed through the community's scrupulous observance of the law and through its own liturgy and cultus (1QS 8.5-6).

The concept of the community as the true eschatological temple in which the pure and perfect sacrifice is offered is again expressed in 4QFlor (4Q174) 1.1-4:

2 Sam 7:10 [And] an enemy [will trouble him no mo]re, [nor will] the son of iniquity [afflict him again] as at the beginning. From the day on which 2 [I established judges] over my people, Israel. This (refers to) the house which [they will establish] for [him] in the last days, as is written in the book of 3 [Moses: Exod 15:17-18 A Temple of the Lord] will you establish with your hands. YHWH shall reign for ever and ever. This (refers to) the house into which shall never enter 4 [...] either the Ammonite, or the Moabite, or the Bastard, or the foreigner, or the proselyte, never, because there [he will reveal] to the holy ones.³⁴¹

This is part of Nathan's prophecy to David concerning the building of a house for Yahweh. The word 'house' is used in the prophecy with a dual meaning, first as the dwelling place of God, and secondly, as a reference to a dynasty. This dual sense of the word 'house' appropriately conveys the community's conception of itself as the true temple of Yahweh, and also as a reference to its leader, the Teacher of Righteousness.

Another aspect of this temple symbolism is that of its purity and holiness. Evidence from 11QT indicates that the Essenes were concerned to maintain their habitation in Jerusalem clean and ritually pure.³⁴² Members were ordered to provide houses outside the city as toilets.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ It is possible that the sectaries' aversion to the temple in Jerusalem, in addition to their revulsion at the corruption by the temple aristocracy, may be partly explained by the fact that it was not built according to the specifications in 11QT. See Vermes, *DSSE*, pp. 128-58.

³⁴¹ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 136; Allegro, 'Fragments of a Qumran Scroll of Eschatological Midrashim', *JBL* 77 (1958), 350-54; W. R. Lane, 'A New Commentary Structure in 4QFlorilegium', *JBL* 78 (1959), 343-46.

³⁴² Martínez, *DSST*, pp. 154-84.

³⁴³ This purity regulation is evidently an elaboration on Deut 23.12-14. Pixner, 'An Essene Quarter?' 245-84.

The reason why the sectaries felt themselves bound by this regulation was not on hygienic grounds alone, but mainly because the members of the community living together in a settlement constituted a *מחנה* (in fact, a camp of the forces of God). They saw themselves in a special relationship to God and his continual presence in their midst – a relationship of purity and holiness akin to that of the Aaronic priesthood (Lev 21). Moreover, according to 1QM 7.3b-7, the Essenes kept their encampment clean because of the presence of the holy angels, who were poised to enlist with their hosts for the eschatological battle:

And no young boy or any woman at all shall enter the camps when they leave Jerusalem to go to war...And no lame, blind...nor any man suffering from uncleanness in his flesh, none of these will go out to war with them...and no man who has not cleansed himself of his 'spring' on the day of battle will go down with them, for the holy angels are together with their armies. And there will be a space between all their camps and the place of the hands of about two thousand cubits. And no immodest nakedness will be seen in the surroundings of all their camps (CD 15.15-17; 1QSa 2.3-9; 4QFlor 1.4; cf. Deut 23.14; 1 Cor 11.10).³⁴⁴

A further reason for the sectaries' obsession with purity in the new temple is that it is the place where the right and pleasant sacrifices are made to Yahweh. This spiritualising idea of sacrifice again occurs in 4QFlor 1.5b-7a:

And strangers shall lay it waste no more, as they formerly laid waste the Sanctuary of Israel because of its sin. He commanded that a Sanctuary of man be built for Himself, that there they may send up, like the smoke incense, the works of the Law.

Members of the community were exhorted to maintain the purity of their sacrifices by avoiding any contamination with idols (4QFlor 1.16-17).

The community demanded that the sacrifice offered by its members should consist in a life lived in total obedience to the requirements of the law. A mechanical adherence to the law without an inward turning (or repentance) to God was deemed a futile exercise.³⁴⁵ The representation of the life of the community lived in perfect

³⁴⁴ See also 4Q491[4QM^a] frags 1-3, 3-8a (Martínez, *DSST*, pp. 100, 115). The relevance of Qumran angelology for a better understanding of 1 Cor 11.10 has been noted by Fitzmyer, 'A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the Angels of I Corinthians 11.10', *Essays*, pp. 187-204. See also H. W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung*, pp. 16-72; Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran*, pp. 100-107. Davidson, *Angels at Qumran*, pp. 281-82, however, understands 'the holy ones' in 4QFlor 1.4 as a reference to the sect members.

³⁴⁵ See §4.3.4.

obedience to the law, as the true sacrifice offered in the new temple, is echoed elsewhere in 1QS 8.5-10a:

the Community council shall be founded on truth...true witnesses for the judgment and chosen by the will (of God) to atone for the earth and to render the wicked their retribution. It (the Community) will be the tested rampart, the precious cornerstone that does not *Blank* /whose foundations do not/ shake or tremble in their place. *Blank* It will be the most holy dwelling for Aaron, with total knowledge of the covenant of justice and in order to offer a pleasant/ aroma/; and it will be a house of perfection and truth in Israel...And these will be accepted in order to atone for the earth and to decide the judgement of the wicked{...}and there will be no iniquity.³⁴⁶

The above quotation envisages the re-establishment of the people, the land and the law after the unfaithfulness of Israel. God remembered his covenant with the patriarchs by choosing 'a remnant to Israel' (שְׁאִירֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) to dwell among them (CD 1.3-6a).³⁴⁷ The official cultus has been replaced, since the community has become the 'new temple', the 'Community of Holiness', where 'they shall atone for guilty rebellion and for sins of unfaithfulness...without the flesh of holocausts and the fat of sacrifice', and where prayer was to serve 'as an acceptable fragrance of righteousness' (1QS 9.2b-6). As a spiritualised temple, the community council, was to be set apart as 'a Holy of Holiness' for the new temple of Israel (1QS 8.1, 5). The sectaries attributed to the community a measure of expiatory atoning power for the rest of Jewry. Here they considered their community as a substitute for the temple in a more radical way than ever known in Judaism, perhaps *sui generis*.³⁴⁸

The question as to whether the sectaries offered actual sacrifices at Qumran is not very clear from our sources. Philo lends support to the view that the Essenes did not offer any actual sacrifice. He portrays the Essenes as 'especially devout in the service of God, not by offering sacrifices of animals, but by resolving to sanctify their minds'.³⁴⁹ Josephus, on the other hand, reports that the Essenes performed private sacrifices, an assertion which appears to be confirmed by the archaeological discoveries of animal bones at Qumran.³⁵⁰ The Qumran priests were expected to perform legitimate

³⁴⁶ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 12.

³⁴⁷ Lohse, *Texte*, p. 66.

³⁴⁸ Sanders, *Practice and Belief*, p. 376.

³⁴⁹ *Quod Omnis* 75.

³⁵⁰ *Ant.* 18.19. Sanders suggests that here Josephus may be describing an Essene sub-group other than those at Qumran or in CD. —*Practice and Belief*, p. 377.

sacrifices only in the last days of the eschatological war (1QM 2.1-6; cf. 11QT). While there is some ambivalence by the classical writers and DSS about sacrifices, it seems that in general the sectaries did not reject sacrifice as such, for after all that is the work of priests. However, the evidence seems to suggest that the emphasis was on perfection of life through prayer and the study of the law, which are seen as having an expiatory function (1QS 3.4-12; 8.2-4; CD 11.21; 11QPs^a 18.17).³⁵¹

Another text which seems a bit cryptic and less obvious than those considered so far, but which casts light on the temple symbolism of the community, is the *peshar* on Isaiah (4Q164 frag 1.1-3). This is a commentary on Isa 54.11. Here the Qumran community is likened to a building where the priests are the foundation, while the laity are the 'stones' which make the actual superstructure of the building.³⁵² Here, too, the symbolism of the community as the temple is very similar to that noted in 1QS and CD.

6.2.2 *Temple Symbolism in the Early Church*

In the preceding section, an attempt was made to delineate the sectaries' concept of the community as the 'new temple', where the pure and perfect sacrifice is offered. We have also seen that the community was conceived as the pure remnant of Israel. So far no direct parallel to this temple symbolism has been found in Judaism apart from that provided by the NT. It may be argued that there are some form of 'spiritualised' interpretations of the temple cultus in the writings of Josephus and Philo, but there is nothing corresponding to the intensity of the sectaries' identification of their community as the 'new temple'. The writings of both Philo and Josephus which correspond more with Hellenistic thought hardly show any trace of the characteristic Qumran idea of the messianic self-consciousness of the community.³⁵³

Moreover, while the sectaries saw themselves as the remnant, an idea which is not exclusive to them,³⁵⁴ the view that the community itself is the new and holy temple,

³⁵¹ J. M. Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law* SJLA 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), pp. 39-54.

³⁵² Allegro, 'More Isaiah Commentaries from Qumran's Fourth Cave', *JBL* 77 (1958), 215-21; Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 269

³⁵³ Gärtner, *Temple and Community*, p. 47.

³⁵⁴ For a detailed and thorough-going discussion of the remnant motif in the Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, Ugaritic and Egyptian texts, as well as in the Hebrew Bible, see G. F. Hasel, *The Remnant:*

which offers the true sacrifice pleasing to God, is *sui generis*. This has no parallel in the concept of 'the remnant' in both the OT and late Judaism. In fact there is no direct parallel in Judaism to the Qumran negative attitude to the temple apart from the NT (e.g. Stephen's speech in Acts 7.47-19).

We shall begin our investigation of the NT texts with the Pauline corpus, which most scholars accept as the earliest documents of the NT: penned within a decade or so of the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.³⁵⁵ These were written at a time contemporaneous with active Essene influence in Palestine. This is followed by 1 Peter 2.4-6 which is thematically closer to the Pauline passages on temple symbolism. Finally, we shall consider the letter to the Hebrews, with its emphasis on holiness and the priesthood.

6.2.2.1 *The Temple of the Living God (2 Cor 6.14-7.1; 1 Cor 3.16-17)*

2 Cor 6.14-7.1 is one of the clearest statements in the Pauline corpus which highlights the idea of the Christian community as the temple, and certainly one of the most reminiscent in its terminology of the theology of Qumran.³⁵⁶

Before looking at the similarities, we should note that 2 Cor 6.14-7.1 is a complex passage which has long posed a problem for the exegete.³⁵⁷ It has been seen as non-Pauline by various scholars. First, it is argued that the passage rudely interrupts the appeal begun in 6.11-13 and concluded in 7.2-3. The second problem is linguistic: the passage contains words and concepts which are not found in the Pauline literature. In fact, some words such as ἑτεροζυγοῦντες, μετοχή, συμφώνησις, Βελιάρ, συγκατάθεσις, ἐμπεριπατέω, εἰσδέχομαι and μολυσμός are *hapax legomena* in the entire NT. Thirdly, it is characteristic of Paul, in theological arguments, to juxtapose πνεῦμα and σάρξ in opposition to each other.³⁵⁸ However, in the present

The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah 2nd edn. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1974), esp. pp. 1-134.

³⁵⁵ L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (London: SCM, 1988), p. 3.

³⁵⁶ J. Gnilka, '2 Cor 6: 14-7: 1 in the light of the Qumran Texts and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs', in *Paul and Qumran*, pp. 48-68.

³⁵⁷ For a good introduction and bibliography see V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* AB 32A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), pp. 371-83.

³⁵⁸ See §5.5.4.

context the expression σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος is used in a generic sense to designate the whole person (cf. Gen 2.7). Fourthly, the admonition to the Corinthian Christians to separate from unbelievers seems inconsistent with Paul's plea in 1 Cor 5.9-10; 10.27; cf 7.12-16. In view of these difficulties, Fitzmyer labels it a 'non-Pauline interpolation'.³⁵⁹ Some see it as a typical Pauline passage which has merely been misplaced in 2 Corinthians, or a fragment of the non-extant pre-canonical letter of Paul to the Corinthian congregation referred to in 1 Cor 5.9.³⁶⁰

However, a number of scholars have argued persuasively that 2 Cor 6.14-7.1 is not only Pauline, but also an integral part of 2 Corinthians.³⁶¹ First, while the list of non-Pauline vocabulary may seem formidable, some of the key words have definite cognates in the Pauline corpus. For example, the verbs ἐμπεριπατέω and εἰσδέχομαι also occur in quotations from the OT (LXX) and are therefore irrelevant to the question of Paul's own usage.³⁶² Secondly, the use of σάρξ in the neutral sense and πνεῦμα to indicate the whole person is not entirely non-Pauline (cf. 1 Cor 6.16; 7.34; 15.39).³⁶³ Thirdly, while the demand for total separation from the ἀπίστοις appears to conflict with 1 Cor 5.10; 10.27, it could be that Paul in 2 Cor 6.17 'is

³⁵⁹ Fitzmyer, *Essays*, pp. 205-17; N. A. Dahl, 'A Fragment and its Context: 2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1', in Dahl and P. Donahue, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1977), pp. 62-69; H. D. Betz, '2 Cor 6.14-7.1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?' *JBL* 92 (1973), 88-108; Bornkamm, 'The History of the Origin of the so-called Second Letter to the Corinthians', *NTS* 8 (1961/62), 258-64; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* vol 1 trans K. Grobel (London: SCM, 1952), p. 205.

³⁶⁰ R. H. Strachan, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* MNTC (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), xv-xxii; A. A. Plummer, *The Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1915), pp. 204-212, esp. 204.

³⁶¹ M. Goulder, '2 Cor 6:14-7:1 as an Integral Part of 2 Corinthians', *NovT* 36 (1994), 47-57; Margaret E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: Introduction and Commentary on II Corinthians I-VII* ICC vol I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), pp. 25-36 470-85; D. A. de Silva, 'Measuring Penultimate against Ultimate Reality: An Investigation of the Integrity and Argumentation of 2 Corinthians', *JSNT* 52 (1993), 41-70; J. M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus* WUNT 48 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), pp. 187-220; J. Lambrecht, 'The Fragment 2 Cor vi 14-vii 1: A Plea for its Authenticity', in T. Baarda et al. eds., *Miscellanea Neotestamentica* vol 2 *NovTSup* 48 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 142-61; G. D. Fee, 'II Corinthians vi.14-vii.1 and Food Offered to Idols', *NTS* 23 (1977), 140-61.

³⁶² See §6.4.2 below.

³⁶³ R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* WBC 40 (Waco: Word Books, 1986), pp. 209-10; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* BNTC (London: 1973), p. 202; Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* NCB (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 216.

making use of a paranetical tradition formulated originally for some different purpose, such as baptismal catechesis'.³⁶⁴

The case for 2 Cor 6.14-7.1 being an original part of 2 Corinthians is good; in any case there are remarkable affinities with the thought-forms of Qumran theology. In addition to the amalgam of OT scriptural phrases as proof texts, there is the dualism between righteousness and iniquity, light and darkness, Christ and Belial, the temple of God and idols, the idea of the community as the 'temple of God', and the exhortation to purity. We do not doubt the occurrence of similar ideas in late Judaism, but the combination of so many of them, including the specifically Qumran idea of the community as the temple, is particularly significant.

6.2.2.2 *The Use of the Old Testament*

In 2 Cor 6.14-7.1, Paul, following the tradition of contemporary Jewish exegesis, combines a number of OT quotations to underline the election of the Christian community by God. The scriptural proof in 2 Cor 6.16b, ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν θεός καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μου λαός, corresponds to Lev 26.11-12 (καὶ θήσω τὴν διαθήκην μου ἐν ὑμῖν, ...καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω ἐν ὑμῖν· καὶ ἔσομαι ὑμῶν Θεός, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔσεσθέ μου λαός [LXX]) and Ezek 37.27 (καὶ ἔσται ἡ κατασκήνωσίς μου ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς Θεός, καὶ αὐτοὶ μου ἔσονται λαός [LXX]). This is followed by a quotation from Isa 52.11, part of Ezek 20.34 and 2 Sam 7.14 in verse 17, and then Jer 31.1, 9 (MT) in verse 18.

Notice that whereas Paul uses ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς, Ezekiel and Leviticus have κατασκήνωσίς and σκηνή respectively. In the LXX both statements correspond to the MT כְּנֶסֶת, often used to describe the tabernacle or temple and the presence of God. It is this idea of God's presence with the Christians to which Paul seems to be referring, an idea found elsewhere in the NT (John 15.23; Rev 21.3).

³⁶⁴ Thrall, *II Corinthians I-VII*, pp. 31, 35-36. Fee's solution that this radical separation is with reference to the sharing of the cultic meal between some of the Corinthian Christians and unbelievers in pagan temples is less convincing. As he admits there is no specific reference to this practice. —'Food Offered to Idols', pp. 140-61.

For Paul, God's presence with his people is inextricably linked with the concept of a spiritual temple. Here, his use of ἁγός, which normally refers to the 'Holy of Holies' instead of ἱερόν, which refers to the whole temple, may be deliberate. While it is difficult to know whether Paul took these OT texts from a collection of *testimonia*, or from Qumran, or from some other late Jewish sources, it cannot be denied that their theme and character closely resemble 4QFlor 1.1-4.³⁶⁵ Moreover, while Lev 26.12 is used in traditions other than the DSS for the future hopes of Judaism, when the temple would be rebuilt,³⁶⁶ it is in the Qumran tradition that the concept of the community as the temple of God is clearly underlined.

6.2.2.3 *Dualism*

The first important parallel between 2 Cor 6.14-7.1 and Qumran is its sharply dualistic outlook. The dualism is couched in rhetorical questions: 'For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?' Paul is acquainted with the dualism of light-darkness. He often uses dualistic language to impress upon his followers that they are now in the realm of light, and should no longer walk in darkness. For example in Rom 13.12: 'Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light' (cf. 1 Thess 5.5). Even though the Qumran expressions 'sons of light' and 'sons of darkness' are not explicitly stated here, the contrast between light and darkness in the context of a κοινωνία among believers and unbelievers, suggests that this idea, which features prominently in the DSS (e.g. 1QS 3.19-24), is shared with the NT.³⁶⁷

The appearance here of Belial in opposition to Christ is very strange. In the OT the word בליעל connotes worthlessness, wickedness and perdition, but the idea of

³⁶⁵ Fitzmyer, *Essays*, pp. 67, 79-81.

³⁶⁶ For example, in *Jub* 1.17 we read: 'And I shall build my sanctuary in their midst, and I shall dwell among them. And I shall be their God and they will be my people truly and rightly'.

³⁶⁷ Klinzing, *Umdeutung*, pp. 167-210.

Belial with respect to a person is not unambiguously found there.³⁶⁸ Therefore, Paul could not have found Belial as a name for the devil in the OT, nor in the LXX, which translates the Hebrew expression (Judges 20.13). In fact, Belial came to represent the incarnate powers of Satan in later Jewish literature. This transition, according to Huppenbauer, is clearly evident in the DSS.³⁶⁹ Here, Belial represents the incarnation of the head of the powers of evil, the adversary of God, and the tempter of Israel.³⁷⁰

6.2.2.4 *The Christian Community as the Temple of God*

The second significant parallel between 2 Cor 6.14-7.1 and Qumran is the conception of the Corinthian congregation as the temple of God, a concept which, as far as we are aware, is known only in the DSS. Paul's overarching consideration here is to lay a basis for the community as the temple of God.³⁷¹ This is the import of the rhetorical question in verse 16a: 'What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God'.

The Qumran sectaries' preoccupation with holiness (the community is regarded as 'an Everlasting Plantation, a House of Holiness for Israel')³⁷² explains their stern proscription of all contact with non-members or 'sons of darkness'. This theme is echoed in 2 Cor 6.16a where Paul portrays the Christian community as 'the temple of the living God' with a prohibition against consorting with the ἄπιστοι.³⁷³

The symbolic application of the temple for the community makes it not implausible to suppose that by idols Paul meant not so much the actual images – though the fact remains that in Corinth pagan idolatry was a reality – but the impurity

³⁶⁸ B. Otzen, 'בְּלִיַּא'ל b'liyya'al', *TDOT* 2.131-36. Some, however, suggest that the term lends itself to a personified usage, since worthless actions and thoughts do not just happen in a vacuum, but are caused by a being. See P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Gott und Belial: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Dualismus in den Texten aus Qumran* SUNT 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), pp. 74-78; K. G. Kuhn, *Konkordanz zu den Qumrantexten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), p. 33.

³⁶⁹ H. W. Huppenbauer, 'Belial in den Qumrantexten', *ThZ* 15 (1959), 81-89.

³⁷⁰ 1QM 13.11f; CD 4.13; 5.18; 12.2; 4QFlor 8f. Here Belial is never an adversary of the messiah. However, in *Test Sim* 5.3; *Test Lev* 18.12; 19.1; *Test Iss* 6.1; *Test Dan* 5.10-13, Belial appears in opposition to both God and the messiah. For further discussion see Kuhn, 'Der Epheserbrief im Lichte der Qumrantexte', *NTS* 7 (1960), 334-46; Gnika, '2 Cor 6:14-7:1' in *Paul and Qumran*, pp. 48-68.

³⁷¹ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, pp. 189-212.

³⁷² 1QS 8.4-6; 9.5-7; 4QFlor 1.6.

³⁷³ See Gnika, '2 Cor 6:14-7:1' in *Paul and Qumran*, pp. 48-68; Fitzmyer, *Essays*, pp. 213-14.

contracted by associating with unbelievers. In the strict Qumran dualism, there was a sharp distinction between the community as the 'new temple', and the apostate, corrupt official Jerusalem temple. Similarly, we have here a distinction between the Christian community, now classified as the 'new' people and the unbelievers.³⁷⁴

6.2.2.5 *Exhortation to a Life of Purity*

Paul concludes the above passage with an emphatic demand for purity and holiness by urging the believers to separate themselves from every defilement. This purity motif underlay the sectaries' separation from the rest of the nation, who, in the eyes of the sectaries, were living contrary to the requirements of the Torah. However, in 2 Cor 6.14-7.1, the exhortation has taken on distinctly Christian characteristics. Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to be holy because God symbolically dwells among them as his temple is repeated in 1 Cor 3.16-17: οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν; εἴ τις τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φθείρει, φθερεῖ τοῦτον ὁ θεός· ὁ γὰρ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν, οἵτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς.³⁷⁵

Furthermore, there is a striking correspondence in terminology between Paul's use of the 'spirit' and the DSS. For both the 'spirit' can be defiled and purified. The use of πνεῦμα in 2 Cor 7.1 to denote the whole person and the need to have it cleansed from its defilement by obedience to God – and his precepts – is similar to CD 5.11-12: 'And also they defile his Holy Spirit, for with blasphemous tongue they have opened their mouth against the statutes of God's covenant...'³⁷⁶ The defiled human spirit occurs again in 1QH 3.21-22a:

for someone you fashioned out of clay
to be an everlasting community.
The corrupt spirit you have purified
from the great sin
so that he can take his place

³⁷⁴ 2 Cor 6.16 does not develop the idea of the community as the new temple, but the overall theme of the passage supports this idea.

³⁷⁵ Paul further employs the temple symbolism in connection with the concept of a spiritual sacrifice in Rom 12.1; 15.15-16.

³⁷⁶ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 36.

with the host of the holy ones.³⁷⁷

From the above comparison a number of conclusions are possible: (i) 2 Cor 6.14-7.1 may have originated from Qumran and later been Christianised; (ii) it may have been composed by a Christian with a mind-set close to the traditions prevalent at Qumran; or (iii) the ideas in this passage are not exclusive to the Qumran texts, but represent what may be considered the common heritage of Jewry in the second temple period.³⁷⁸ Against the third possibility we have noted that while Qumran shares a lot of ideas with mainstream Judaism, the concept of the community as the temple appears to be distinctively Qumranic in origin. The concentration of so many Qumranic ideas, incline us to conclude in favour of one of the first two possibilities, with option two being the more likely.

6.2.2.6 *Ephesians 2.18-22 and 1 Tim 3.15*

Like 2 Cor 6.14-7.1, Eph 2.18-22 also contains Pauline traditions even though its authenticity is sometimes questioned. Here, too, the temple symbolism is, in many respects, similar to the texts in 1 and 2 Corinthians considered above. What is significant here, however, is the appearance of new details which are not found in the Corinthian passages, but which are of great importance in the Qumran texts.

The theological argument which Paul propounds in Eph 2 begins from verse 11, where the contrast between the Gentiles' pre-Christian past in relation to Israel and their present Christian state is highlighted (verses 12-13). In verses 14-18, Paul explains that the Gentiles' present state has been brought about through the death of Christ (cf. Isa 57.19).³⁷⁹ It is through this Christ-event that the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles is dismantled. There are no longer two distinct groups, but one, the true people of God in the Christian Church, who now have all the privileges once restricted to the Jews. Thus, through Christ, both Jew and Gentile have access through the Spirit to God (προσπαγωγήν οἱ ἀμφοτέροι ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα,

³⁷⁷ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 332. See Klinzing, *Umdeutung*, p. 174.

³⁷⁸ Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 197-99; Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, p. 214; Gnlika, '2 Cor 6: 14-7: 1' in *Paul and Qumran*, pp. 48-68; Fitzmyer, *Essays*, pp. 205-17.

³⁷⁹ M. S. Moore, 'Ephesians 2: 14-16: A History of Recent Interpretation', *EvQ* 54 (1982), 163-68.

2.18). It is against this background that Paul begins his exposition of the 'holy temple' in 2.21-22. In fact, the argument in 2.11-22 stands parallel to 2.1-10 where Paul contrasts his readers' pre-Christian past with their present Christian state.³⁸⁰

Within the framework of temple symbolism, it is only those who have been sanctified, the company of the true people of God (συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ), who can obtain access to the temple of God. The Gentile Christians are no longer ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι. Here, too, there is a striking correspondence between the Ephesian passage and 4QFlor 1.2-7:

This is the House which [He will build for them in the] last days, as it is written in the book of Moses...This is the House into which [the unclean shall] never [enter, nor the uncircumcised,] nor the Ammonite, nor the Moabite, nor the half-breed, nor the foreigner, nor the stranger, ever: for there shall my Holy Ones be...He has commanded that a Sanctuary of men be built for Himself, that they may send up, like the smoke of incense, the works of the Law.

Notice the parallel words like 'house' of God, 'foreigner or alien' (בן נכר), or 'sojourner' (גל) who is outside the commonwealth of Israel. All these words relate to ξένοι and πάροικοι in the LXX. For the presence of God and the host of the holy ones or angels to remain in the community, it was imperative for the members to purify themselves of any defilement (1QM 7.3b-7; 4Q491 [4QM^a] frags 1-3.3-8a; 1QSa 2.3-9). The bond between the Ephesian community and the host of heaven is also expressed in 2.6, 18.³⁸¹

In verses 20-22, Paul gives some detail about the structure of this spiritual temple: It is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, ὄντος ἁκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (cf. Ps 118.22). The whole structure is joined together (συναρμολογουμένη) to form the Christian community, which the apostle explicitly identifies as the ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ. The above train of thought may be compared with 1QS 11.8-9 which contains a similar motif. Here the members of the community are joined to the 'Sons of Heaven' to form a 'Council of the Community, a foundation of the Building of Holiness, and eternal Plantation

³⁸⁰ A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* WBC 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), pp. 122-65. For the hymnic character of Eph 2.11-22, see J. T. Sanders, 'Hymnic Elements in Ephesians 1-3', *ZNW* 56 (1965), 214-32.

³⁸¹ F. Mussner, 'Contribution made by Qumran to the Understanding of the Epistle to the Ephesians', in *Paul and Qumran*, pp. 159-78.

throughout all ages to come'.³⁸² Similarly, in 1QS 8.5-9 the terms, 'temple', 'truth' and 'foundation' are mentioned together. The members of the community are referred to as 'witnesses to the truth, the tried wall, that *precious corner-stone*, whose foundations shall neither rock nor sway in their place (Isa xxviii, 16)' and where Aaron shall offer a sacrifice of 'sweet fragrance'.

Kuhn has also noted similarities between the style of Eph 1.4-14 and the diction of 1QH. The spiritual warfare described in Eph 6.10-12 is rich with parallels to 1QS 3.13-4.26. Kuhn concludes that the epistle shows a particular relationship to Qumran in terms of language, terminology, thought and ideas. He argues that what is new in Ephesians with respect to the Qumran texts is its Christology.³⁸³ Lincoln has also concluded that Ephesians marks 'a further stage in the appropriation of temple imagery by the early Christians. Not only the individual believer or the local church, but also all believers, the universal Church, can be held to be the focus of God's presence'.³⁸⁴

However, there are differences between the DSS and Ephesians. The major emphasis in the use of the temple imagery in Ephesians is on the relationship of the community to Christ. The Christian community is founded on Christ (ἐν κυρίῳ; ἐν ᾧ) and functions in relation to him.³⁸⁵ The emphasis on the heirdom of Jews and Gentiles would have been unacceptable to the sectaries.

The temple imagery occurs again in 1 Tim 3.15. Paul, in his instructions to young Timothy, is concerned to set out clearly how one 'ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of truth'. Paul states that the 'house of God', οἶκος θεοῦ, is the company of believers ἥτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος. There is a strong resemblance between this statement and 2 Cor 6.16, ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμεν ζῶντος, perhaps suggesting a common background, where the temple symbolism was a predominant

³⁸² §6.2.

³⁸³ Kuhn, 'The Epistle to the Ephesians in the light of the Qumran Texts', in *Paul and Qumran*, pp. 115-31; M. Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3* AB 34 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 18-21, 270-74.

³⁸⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 156.

³⁸⁵ Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* 2nd edn. (London: SCM, 1989), pp. 12-64; C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1977), pp. 54-69.

motif. While οἶκος and ἐκκλησία carry separate meanings, Paul combines them here in such a way that their separate meanings are hardly distinguishable.

Furthermore, like the Qumran community, the Christian community is urged to conduct itself in a manner befitting a community of the 'living God' (1 Tim 3.15). The expression, στῦλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας, a *hapax legomenon*, brings 1 Tim 3.15 even closer to Qumran thought. The best comparative material is found in 1QS 5.3-6, where the community is urged to practise truth, humility, justice and uprightness, so that 'they may lay a foundation of truth for Israel, for the Community of the everlasting Covenant'. However, as in Ephesians, Christology makes the difference, a development expressed by the hymn to Christ in 1 Tim 3.16 and underlined by the phrase, μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον.³⁸⁶

We conclude, in light of the strong correspondence between the DSS considered thus far and Eph 2.18-22 and 1 Tim 3.15, that we are here dealing with a form of temple symbolism in the Christian tradition which either shows a direct dependence on Qumran, or an indirect connection that may be explained by a common tradition.

6.2.2.7 1 Peter 2.4-6

This passage is replete with terms reminiscent of Eph 2.20-22; 4.12, 16, though the emphasis on the Church as the body of Christ is lacking in 1 Peter. In 1 Peter 2.4-10 the author focuses on the Christian community as the temple of God, having referred to the individual spiritual growth in verses 1-3. The Christians are ὡς λίθοι ζῶντες οἰκοδομεῖσθε οἶκος πνευματικὸς εἰς ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον ἀνενέγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους [τῷ] θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (verse 5). The οἶκος πνευματικὸς here implies a new sphere created by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but the mention of priests, sacrifices and the ἀκρογωνιαίος (verse 6) in this context can hardly refer to anything but the temple. This spiritual house is made up of individual members who are referred to as λίθοι ζῶντες.

³⁸⁶ R. Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen* SUNT 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967), pp. 133-37.

Whatever the conceptual background of the term 'living stones',³⁸⁷ one thing, however, is clear: the background to its use here is to be found in the temple symbolism and Christology. Peter points out that Christians can be built up into a living spiritual temple through the living Christ. In conformity to contemporary Jewish exegesis, Peter employs OT proof texts to substantiate this concept of Christ as the 'living foundation stone which the builders rejected', but which has become the 'head corner-stone' (1 Pet 2.6-8; cf. Ps 118.22; Isa 28.16; 8.14).³⁸⁸

The temple imagery of the NT connects at a number of points with the DSS. In addition to the passages in 1QS and 4QFlor cited above, which unambiguously portray the Qumran community as the temple, the author of 1QH 6.25-27a writes:

But I shall be as one who enters a fortified city, as one who seeks refuge behind a high wall until deliverance (comes); I will [lean on] Thy truth, O my God. For Thou wilt set the foundation on rock and the framework by the measuring-cord of justice; and the tried stones [Thou wilt lay] by the plumb-line [of truth], to [build] a mighty [wall] which shall not sway; and no man entering there shall stagger (cf. 4Q164, a *peshet* on Isa 54.11).

Notice the theme of permanence, constancy and certainty which is evoked in the above passage, and which is not lost in 1 Pet 2.4-6. The difference here is that the word, 'stone', the 'costly stone' of Isa 28.16 (cf. 1QS 8.5-8) which late Judaism and NT regarded as a reference to the messiah, is used by the sectaries to refer to the members of the community. They are built into a wall whose foundation cannot be shaken. Thus the community as a holy building will stand forever. But notice that the interpretation of the 'stone' with respect to the messiah in 1 Peter 2 is transferred to the Christian community (the 'living stones'). Herein lies a resemblance with Qumran.³⁸⁹

Another important element in the temple symbolism of 1 Peter 2 is the concept of the Christian community as ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον (verse 5) and βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα (verse 9; cf. Exod 19.6). The Qumran sectaries frequently referred to themselves as priests, and were conscious to maintain a state of purity and holiness at all times. This holiness was linked with the idea that they were the only ones qualified

³⁸⁷ Similar expressions 'living water' and 'living bread' occur in the Fourth Gospel (John 4.10; 6.51).

³⁸⁸ For further discussion, see P. Minear, 'The House of Living Stones: A Study of 1 Peter 2:4-12', *Ecumenical Review* 34 (1982), 238-48; K. R. Snodgrass, '1 Peter ii.1-10: Its Formation and Literary Affinities', *NTS* 24 (1977), 97-106.

³⁸⁹ J. R. Michaels, *1 Peter* WBC 49 (Waco: Word Books, 1988), pp. 92-113.

to offer the appropriate sacrifices of thanksgiving and a godly life which could atone for the sins of the entire nation (1QS 8.5-10). Similarly, the writer of 1 Peter 2 employs the imagery of purity, holiness, priesthood and sacrifice to express the ethical and moral obligations imposed by the faith of the Christian community in Jesus Christ (verse 9). Here only the sacrifice of Christ has the effect of atoning for sin.

However, there is an important difference between the perspectives of 1 Peter and Qumran. The Qumran community itself is symbolically the 'precious cornerstone', while in 1 Peter, Jesus, as Lord, is the 'cornerstone'. Moreover, the fact that 1 Peter is primarily concerned with Gentiles rather than Jews differentiates it from the fundamental concerns of the Qumran community. We conclude that while there are differences as well as lack of real evidence that Qumran influenced 1 Peter, the significant similarities noted above make it seem likely that 1 Peter is here drawing on tradition rooted in Judaism, but intensely expressed at Qumran.

6.2.2.8 *The Letter to the Hebrews*

The connection between holiness, priesthood and sacrifice is prominent in the letter to the Hebrews. This letter is replete with sacrificial terminology akin to that of the OT and other literature of the second temple period. For example, in 3.1-6 the author compares the priesthood of Moses and Jesus. Even though Moses was faithful in his service as priest over God's house, Jesus, the Son of God, supersedes Moses.

Moreover, Jesus is the high priest *par excellence*, after the order of Melchizedek (5.5-6; 7; cf. Gen 14.18; Ps 110.4). The superiority of Jesus' priesthood is underlined by the fact that he received tithes from Abraham, the founding father of the Jewish nation, and, by implication, from Levi, whose priestly descendants were commanded to accept tithes from the people (Heb 7.1-10). The eternity of this Melchizedek figure is contrasted with the mortality of the Levitical priests. He ministers not in the earthly sanctuary, nor with 'gifts according to the law' (8.1-7; 9.11). Here the focus is not on Melchizedek *per se*, but upon the superiority of Jesus' priestly office.³⁹⁰

³⁹⁰ D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* SBLMS 18 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), p. 153.

In Heb 1.2 the author articulates that God's final revelation and saving activity have been made through the Son because of his superiority to the prophets. He is also appointed 'the heir of all things' (cf. Ps 82.8; 11QMelch col II.4-5). Furthermore, the Son is far superior to angels and all heavenly beings are subject to him (Heb 1.6-7, 14). Having established the superiority of the Son, the author, in the *parenetical* passage of Heb 2.1-4, urges his readers to heed the message of salvation declared διὰ τοῦ κυρίου and confirmed by 'those who heard him'. If not, *a fortiori*, 'how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?'

The author takes up again the theme of the superiority of Jesus with the use of several proof-texts from the OT (e.g. Ps 7.6; cf. 110.1 in Heb 2.8). In Heb 2.14 reference is made to the battle between the Son and the devil: ἵνα διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸν διάβολον. While the struggle with the devil is well attested in the literature of second temple Judaism, it is interesting to note here the recurring reference in the DSS to the battle between the 'sons of light' led by God and his appointed agents and the 'sons of darkness' commanded by the 'Prince of Darkness/Evil', and the conflict between the angelic warrior Melchizedek and Belial.³⁹¹

In Heb 13.15-16 the author urges the addressees to 'continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name'. While one cannot deny its closeness to the OT (Ps 50.14), this also shows a closer affinity to the temple symbolism noted in 1QS 9.3-6, where the true sacrifice consists not only of thanksgiving, but of a holy life lived in accordance with the law. The readers of Hebrews are further encouraged not to be weary in good works, and to live together in communal sharing: 'Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God' (13.16). The Qumran community of goods is discussed below, but suffice it to say here that a life of good deeds lived out in the community where things are shared in common is referred to as 'sacrifices pleasing to God'.

³⁹¹ 11QMelch col II.13. Martínez, *DSS*, p. 140. See §5.6.5 above.

There is a further aspect of the temple symbolism in Heb 12, where the writer exhorts the Christian community to be disciplined in the fight against sin and any defilement that may stand in the way of maintaining holiness (esp. verses 14-16). This state of holiness is imperative because of the Christians' fellowship with God and the angels (12.22-23; cf. e.g. 1QM 11.1-12.1; 7.4-6; 1QSa 2.3-11).

The above considerations show impressive affinities between the DSS and the Book of Hebrews. It is tempting to conclude that Qumran offers the conceptual background to Hebrews.³⁹² Some scholars have gone as far as to claim that Hebrews was written to either convert members of the Qumran sect to Christianity or to ex-Qumran members who have accepted Christianity.³⁹³ But there are, of course, differences between them. For example, the emphasis on the Sonship of Jesus, his superiority to angels, the eternity of his high-priesthood and his victory over death have no parallel in the DSS. Moreover, while both communities react against the Jerusalem cultus, Hebrews is more concerned to portray the inadequacy of the Levitical order.³⁹⁴

In conclusion, while we cannot be certain that Hebrews was aimed at converting the sectaries or those already converted, it is evident that there is a correspondence between the letter and the DSS. Undoubtedly, there are points of contact between Hebrews and the OT, just as there are between DSS and the OT. However, the affinities between Hebrews and the DSS, for example, the Melchizedek conception, the temple imagery with its emphasis on holiness and purity, the oblique reference to the community of goods, the role of angels and the relationship between the heavenly and the earthly communities, are remarkable. Here the DSS provide us with illuminating

³⁹² P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 11-15. For a valuable survey and discussion of the history of the interpretation of Hebrews, see G. W. Buchanan, 'The Present State of Scholarship on Hebrews', in *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for M. Smith at Sixty* ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 1:299-330; *To the Hebrews* AB 36 (Garden City, Doubleday, 1972).

³⁹³ Y. Yadin, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews', in C. Rabin & Y. Yadin eds., *Scripta Hierasolymitana* 4 (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1965), 36-55; H. Kosmala, *Hebräer-Essener-Christen: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der frühchristlichen Verkündigung* Studia postbiblica 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1959), pp. x, 1-43, 76-91. For detailed consideration and critique of the arguments of Yadin and others, see Hurst, *Hebrews*, pp. 43-66; F. F. Bruce, '"To the Hebrews" or "To the Essenes"?' *NTS* 9 (1963), 217-32.

³⁹⁴ P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* NIGTC (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), pp. 48-49.

insights into the general background of some of the concepts noted in Hebrews, though other influences and traditions of the second temple period may have played a part.³⁹⁵

6.3 Conclusion

A fundamental correspondence between Qumran and the primitive Church is the shared idea that the Jerusalem temple and its cultus have been replaced by a community of the faithful. With the exception of these two communities, this idea appears to have no equivalent in the extant evidence about contemporary Judaism.

The Qumran sectaries were convinced that their community was the true temple because they considered the Jerusalem temple to have been defiled, and therefore unable to fulfil its cultic functions. They did, however, entertain the idea, as observed in 1QM, that after their victory in the eschatological battle, the defiled temple would be re-consecrated and re-constituted to resume its rightful position as the heart of the Jewish national life (11QT). Meanwhile, the godly life of the community lived in accordance with the law was enough to fulfil the functions of the temple in making atonement for the sins of the nation and in winning God's approval.

The early Church also believed that the temple and its sacrifices were no longer efficacious in the messianic age. The temple and its cultus have been replaced by the Christian community. However, unlike Qumran, the Christian community was created around the risen and exalted Christ. There was no need of its sacrifices to atone for sin since by Jesus' death the final atonement has been made. The believer's life of obedience to Christ was an intrinsic part of the messianic way of life. Thus the early Church's point of departure from the Qumran concept of the community as the temple

³⁹⁵ The question of whether Hellenistic Judaism (including Philonic influence), or apocalyptic Judaism, or a combination of influences from both strands, offer the conceptual background of Hebrews cannot be discussed here. Such discussion, which requires a separate and careful study of the sources, is beyond the scope of this work. According to W. L. Lane, the conceptual background of Hebrews should be located within the mainstream of the early Christian tradition, particularly in the Hellenistic wing of the Church. For the non-Christian conceptual background Lane posits influences from the interpretation of the OT in Greek, the traditions of Hellenistic Judaism (which is not to say Philonic or Platonic), and of apocalyptic Judaism. —*Hebrews* WBC 47A (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), pp. civ-cxii. For discussion of Hellenistic and other pre-Gnostic influences, see Hurst, *Hebrews*, pp. 7-42, 67-85.

is centred on its faith in Jesus, the Lord.³⁹⁶ Besides the common belief in the presence of God in their midst, the sectaries and the early Church had a concept of a union between their communities and the heavenly community of holy angels. Consequently, there was the need to preserve the purity and holiness of their respective communities, lest the presence of God and the angels should be withdrawn.

It cannot be denied that some of the ideas we have come across in our discussion also appear in other Jewish texts, including the OT. As NT scholars have rightly pointed out, the NT shows a diversity of ideas; one has to exercise caution in making general conclusions based on the similarity between one corpus and the other. We are also aware of the danger of parallelomania. But the proliferation of such striking concepts in both communities is unprecedented in the second temple period. Here the scrolls make their proper contribution to our understanding of the NT.

³⁹⁶ It appears that the early Christian community initially found it difficult to dissociate itself from the temple. According to Acts 2.46 and 3.1, they continued to attend the temple worship. Paul is known to have visited the temple, teaching and praying there (Acts 18.18; 21.26). It appears that the idea of the community as the true temple had not as yet assumed the dimensions noted in the passages considered above. It was not until the appearance of the Hellenists, represented in Stephen's criticism of the temple that the decisive break might have occurred (Acts 6-7, esp 7.44-50). This, perhaps, is one of the reasons why some suggest that the large number of Hellenists and priests who embraced the Christian faith (Acts 6.1, 7), might have come from the Essene community. If this is so – though it must be noted that there is no scholarly consensus on this thesis – then it represents an element in the growth of the temple symbolism in the early Christian community. For further discussion, see F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* 3rd edn (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), pp. 180-85; Hengel, *Earliest Christianity* trans J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1986), pp. 71-80; Pixner, 'An Essene Quarter?'; I. H. Marshall, 'Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity: Some Critical Comments', *NTS* 19 (1973), 271-87; C. F. D. Moule, 'Once More, Who were the Hellenists?' *ExpTim* 70 (1958-59), 100-102; S. E. Johnson, 'The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline and the Jerusalem Church of Acts', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 129-42; Allegro, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 161.

7. ORGANISATION, INSTITUTIONS AND PRAXIS

7.1 Introduction

Beside the parallels between the early Church and Essenism considered in the previous chapter, there are still further points of contact that can be identified. In this chapter we shall examine the question of whether the influence of Essenism offers us a clue to much of the organisational development of the early Church. This question is to be discussed under the following headings: (i) organisation; (ii) community of goods; (iii) discipline; and (iv) celibacy and divorce.

7.2 Organisation

7.2.1 *Organisation in the Qumran Community*

Scholarly attempts to appreciate the exact connection between the Essenes and the early Church have looked at the early institutional history of both communities. One important aspect of the Qumran community is that while it formed a corporate body united by covenant, whenever it met in a full assembly it had a definite and carefully graduated hierarchic order, with a distinction between the priests (the Zadokites followed by the Levites)³⁹⁷ and the laity (often referred to as 'Israel' or 'the multitude of the men of the community who hold fast to the Covenant' (1QS 5.2-3a, 9; 1.10, 21; cf. CD 3.21-4.1). At the annual convocations and other plenary sessions, the order of ranks was meticulously expressed and consistently followed:

Thus shall they do, year by year, for as long as the dominion of Satan endures. The Priests shall enter first, ranked one after another to the perfection of their spirit; then the Levites; and thirdly, all the people one after another in their Thousands, Hundreds, Fifties, and Tens, that every Israelite may know his place in the Community of God according to the everlasting design. No man shall move down from his place nor move up from his allotted position. For according to the holy design, they shall all of them be in a Community of truth and virtuous

³⁹⁷ It appears 'the elders' referred to in 1QS 6.8 are identical with the Levites, who come next to the sons of Zadok.

humility, of loving kindness and good intent one towards the other, and (they shall all of them be) sons of the everlasting Company (1QS 2.19-25a).

According to the above passage, what undergirds this hierarchic order, and what it in turns seeks to promote and maintain, is the unity of the community, expressed through the twin virtues of love and justice (cf. 1QS 5.1-4a). Furthermore, while the priests have authority in the community, it is the entire community made up of both priests and laity which acts as the deciding authority.

When a novice becomes a full-fledged member of the community, 'they shall enter him in the Rule according to his rank among his brothers for the law, for judgment, for purity and for the placing of his possessions in common. And his advice will be for the Community as will his judgment' (1QS 6.22-23).³⁹⁸ Moreover, while the necessary instruction and rites of passage are administered by the priests and the other officials specially appointed for these tasks, it is the entire community which finally accepts the novice into full membership (1QS 5.8-9).

Besides the didactic and cultic responsibility of the priests at Qumran, 1QS legislates for the conduct of affairs in the smaller communities outside Qumran. Here, too, the order of rank is to be consistently followed, with the first place given to the priests, and the others to follow him in their proper order. The presence of a priest was required at any gathering of ten or more, for the purpose of debate, prayer, or study of the scriptures. It was also the responsibility of the priest to offer grace before the communal meals, and to pronounce blessings (1QS 6.3-7a).³⁹⁹

7.2.2 *The Guardian* (מבקר)

A significant personage in the community was the Guardian (מבקר) or the Bursar. His duties included teaching the community 'to live [according to] the Book of the Community Rule, that they may seek God with a whole heart and soul, and do what is good and right before Him as He commanded by the hand of Moses and all His servants the Prophets' (1QS 1.1-3a). It was his privilege to chair and supervise all the

³⁹⁸ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 10.

³⁹⁹ According to CD, in the absence of an experienced priest, a qualified Levite was to perform all the functions except those exclusively reserved in the scriptures for the priesthood (CD 13.3-7).

convocations of the community, and to ensure, with the help of the other officers, that each member conducted himself in accordance with his rank. An important role of the **מבקר** or the Guardian (Bursar), apparently a member of the priesthood, was the supervision of the neophytes and merging their property with that of the community (1QS 6.11-14, 18-20a). The **מבקר** was also to ensure that there was no possible contact between his congregation and non-members (CD 13.7-13).

In order to fulfil this function effectively he had to be a figure of experience, maturity and great understanding. Hence, the requirement that he must be a man of between thirty and fifty years (CD 14.8b-11). The respect accorded to the **מבקר** is evidenced by the fact that he had a special council of ten judges, made up of four priests and six laymen, who were knowledgeable in the scriptures and between twenty-five and sixty years of age (CD 10.4-10).

Basic to the whole concept of the Qumran covenantal community was the corporate responsibility of each member, irrespective of his position, towards the entire community. The deciding authority in all matters relating to the admission of new members to the community rested with the entire congregation of priests and laymen.

7.2.3 *The Council of the Community*

One significant item of information regarding the orderly running of the Qumran community concerns the assembly of the congregation. This important institution, also known as the 'Council of the Community', consisted of twelve men and three priests:

In the Council of the Community there shall be twelve men and three Priests, perfectly versed in all that is revealed of the Law, whose works shall be truth, righteousness, justice, loving-kindness and humility. They shall preserve the faith in the Land with steadfastness and meekness and shall atone for sin by the practice of justice and by suffering the sorrows of affliction. They shall walk with all men according to the standard of truth and the rule of the time (1QS 8.1-4).

The dearth of information about the twelve men and the three priests makes it difficult to determine the relationship between them.⁴⁰⁰ Milik and others have related the three priests to the three priestly families descended from Levi through his sons

⁴⁰⁰ Vermes, *DSSE*, p. 4.

Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (Gen 46.11).⁴⁰¹ According to F. F. Bruce, the twelve men and the three priests formed the basis for the establishment of the Qumran community – perhaps a nucleus with which the Teacher of Righteousness organised the community.⁴⁰² Bo Reicke proposes that it is preferable to include the three priests among the twelve, and to see in the term 'priests' a special mark of honour. He argues that this would enable us to avoid the rather improbable result that the other twelve were laymen.⁴⁰³

While any suggestion must remain tentative, the significance of the twelve men and the three priests in the community is clearly attested. Beside their expertise and knowledge of legal matters, their presence was essential for the preservation of truth, justice, steadfastness, love and humility in the community (1QS 8.5-7). In short, they were responsible for the smooth running of the community.

7.2.4 Organisation in the Early Church

While there are differences between the kind of organisation found in the early Church, as revealed by the NT documents, and the elaborate structure found at Qumran, there are, however, certain elements which are common to both communities.

It is particularly interesting to compare the 'Council of the Community' of twelve men and three priests with the early Church. Fitzmyer argues that the apostolic twelve in the early Church receives no illumination from the DSS. Neither does he see any connection between the 'three priests' and the 'pillars' of Gal 2.9, nor Peter, James and John, the inner core of Jesus' disciples (Mk 5.37; 9.2 and par). He contends that in both Essene and Christian contexts the number twelve is more plausibly explained as a derivative of the twelve tribes of Israel. According to him, the only element that is common to Qumran and the early Church, as far as this number is concerned, is that both use it in an eschatological context. For example, in 1QM 3.13-14; 5.1-2 the division of the 'sons of light' in the eschatological war is according to twelve tribes,

⁴⁰¹ Milik, *Ten Years*, p. 96; Black, 'Christian Origins', in *Scrolls and Christianity*, pp. 97-106.

⁴⁰² Bruce, 'Jesus and the Gospels in the Light of the Scrolls', in *Scrolls and Christianity*, pp. 70-82.

⁴⁰³ Bo Reicke, 'The Constitution of the Primitive Church in the Light of the Jewish Documents', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 143-56.

while Jesus' saying about the twelve thrones has to do with eschatological judgment (Matt 19.28; Lk 22.30).⁴⁰⁴

However, other scholars have proposed that the reference to the twelve men and three priests may indeed be analogous to the college of the twelve apostles of Jesus, and the three priests are reminiscent of James and Cephas and John (Gal 2.9).⁴⁰⁵ Bo Reicke suggests that if the three priests are included in the twelve in 1QS 8.1, one is reminded of the inner core of Jesus' disciples, namely, Peter, James and John, or Peter, John, and James the brother of the Lord, who later on assumed the leadership of the Jerusalem Church.⁴⁰⁶

A similar view has been expressed by J. Munck, who sees an analogy between the twelve of Qumran and the twelve apostles of the NT. He finds further proof for the importance of the twelve in both communities, in the anxiety and care expressed in the procedure for making up the number after the defection and death of Judas.⁴⁰⁷

Some perceptive reflections on the twelve presbyters in the early Church, in the light of the Qumran discoveries, have been made by R. Bauckham.⁴⁰⁸ First, he notes the evidence in the Jewish Christian traditions found in the Pseudo-Clementines, that a monarchic bishop should have twelve presbyters to assist him in his leadership function in the Church. He posits that James, the Lord's brother, who was not a member of the original twelve (Acts 1.13-26), but had by Gal 2.9 and Acts 21.18 attained a position of pre-eminence in the Jerusalem Church,⁴⁰⁹ may have had a college of twelve presbyters associated with him. Bauckham surmises that James' rise to prominence may be attributable to a variety of factors, including his relative closeness to the more conservative wing of the Church. Moreover, the relative decline of the original twelve

⁴⁰⁴ Fitzmyer, *Essays*, pp. 271-303; Bruce, 'Jesus and the Gospels', in *Scrolls and Christianity*, pp. 70-82.

⁴⁰⁵ R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), p. 75, note 89; J. A. Draper, 'The Twelve Apostles as Foundation Stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Foundation of the Qumran Community', *Neotestamentica* 22 (1988), 41-63; W. Horbury, 'The Twelve and the Phylarchs', *NTS* 32 (1986), 503-27.

⁴⁰⁶ Bo Reicke, 'The Constitution of the Primitive Church', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 143-56.

⁴⁰⁷ J. Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* rev. W. F. Albright & C. S. Mann AB 31 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 298-80.

⁴⁰⁸ R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, pp. 73-75.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. *The Gospel of Thomas* 12.

as a body of leaders resident in Jerusalem may also have strengthened his position. Again, some of the original twelve, like James the son of Zebedee, had been martyred, or driven away by persecution (Acts 12), while others, like Peter, were involved in missionary endeavours in the Diaspora.

A consideration of the theological significance of the council of twelve men and three priests in both Qumran and the early Christian Church further suggests a link between the two communities. In 1QS 8.5-8 the council of the community is referred to as an 'Everlasting Plantation', 'House of Holiness', 'tried wall', 'that precious corner-stone whose foundations shall neither rock nor sway in their place'. Notice the use of similar phrases in connection with the early Church. For example, in Matt 16.18 Peter is addressed as the foundation 'rock' of the Church and the apostles are variously described as 'pillars' and 'foundations' (Gal 2.9; 1 Tim 3.15; Rev 21.14).

The **מבקר** has been compared with the NT **ἐπίσκοπος** (bishop).⁴¹⁰ Etymologically both words mean 'overseer' or 'superintendent'. Josephus makes mention of elected overseers in a description of the organisation of the Essene community: 'They have elected overseers (**ἐπιμεληταί**) who take care of common matters, and without exception each one is (responsible) for the needs of all of them'.⁴¹¹ This appears to be Josephus' equivalent for the **מבקר**. However, the Greek **ὁ ἐπιμελητής** is not found either in the NT or in the LXX, while **ὁ ἐπίσκοπος** which is used in extrabiblical Greek to designate a civic, financial, and religious superintendent, also appears in the LXX (Num 4.16; 31.14; Judges 9.28; IV Kings 11.15, 18).

Some connect the **ἐπίσκοπος** with the **פקיד**, in an effort to dispute any analogy between the **מבקר** and perhaps the development of the NT episcopacy. But Munck has rightly shown that while there is some correspondence between some verbal forms of **פקיד** and **ἐπίσκοπος**, any identification of the two reduces the **ἐπίσκοπος** to an ordinary official (which he was not) and confuses his functions with those of the

⁴¹⁰ H. W. Beyer, 'ἐπίσκοπος', *TDNT* 2.608-22.

⁴¹¹ *War* 2.123, 134; *Refutation* 9.22. Beall, *Josephus' Description*, pp. 14-15.

פְּקִיד (who was an official). The ἐπίσκοπος, like the מַבְקֵר, had a well-defined function and was not merely someone with an official post.⁴¹²

Matthias, who replaced Judas, was elected to join the twelve and to work together in their corporate responsibility of fulfilling the office of a bishop (τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν, Acts 1.20-26). In Paul's charge to the elders (τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους) of Ephesus summoned to Miletus, he tells them to be careful to watch over the flock ἐν ᾧ ὑμεῖς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (Acts 20.28). This charge is reminiscent of the instructions given to the מַבְקֵר who, as was noted above, was not only to 'instruct the Congregation in the works of God', but also to 'love them as a father loves his children, and shall carry them in all their distress like a shepherd his sheep' (CD 13.7-9). Notice that ποιμήν is a significant NT word-group which highlights God's love and care for his people through Jesus, as well as the responsibility of the overseers towards those under their care.⁴¹³ Thus, in Phil 1.1, 1 Tim 3.2, and Titus 1.7, these ἐπισκόποι appear to govern local Churches, a role performed by the מַבְקֵר in the Essene communities.

7.2.5 Summary

The above evidence suggests a close relationship between the Qumran Essene and the early Christian communities in organisational structure, despite some differences. This proposition, it seems to us, is not merely peripheral, but of great significance. Though ruled by a predominantly priestly class, the Qumran community remained a democratic order. While there was an unequivocal distinction in the order of ranks (the priests[sons of Zadok], followed by the Levites and then the laity), which was consistently followed during their plenary sessions, it was the community as a whole, priests and laity, which deliberated together on every aspect affecting the life of the community. The oligarchic order and the democratic process were all meant to foster unity in the community. However, the openness of the early Church contrasts with the

⁴¹² Munck, *Acts*, p. 279.

⁴¹³ Matt 9.36; 10.6; 15.24; Lk 15.4-7 and par; John 10.1-30; Acts 20.28; 1 Cor 9.7; 1 Pet 2.25; 5.4, etc.

sharp distinctions in rank within Qumran. For example, Jesus not only decried the scribes and Pharisees for their outward piety and desire for recognition, but also disabused the disciples' minds from their clamouring after hierarchical positions in the eschatological kingdom, urging them to practise humility toward one another (Matt 23.1-12; Mk 10.35-45 and par).

The evidence further suggests a correspondence between the twelve men (including the three priests) in 1QS and the twelve apostles in the early Church. Here, too, we noticed that while the twelve were significant in the early Church, all the important decisions and ratifications were exercised by the entire community. It also appears that the development of the ministry of the Church toward a monarchy may be understood in light of the role of the **מבקר** in the DSS.

7.3 Community of Goods

7.3.1 *Community of Goods in Essenism*

One distinguishing feature of the Qumran sectaries was the communal sharing of goods. Every prospective member was expected to make a complete oblation of all his talents and possessions. However, there was provision for both private ownership and voluntary community of goods.⁴¹⁴ For example, CD 9.13-16 stipulate what is to be done to any lost and found private item or property which is not claimed by its owner:

Every illegal object which should be given back and has no owner—he who gives it back should confess to the priest and it will be for himself, apart from the ram of the sin-offering. And in the same way, every lost object which has been found and has no owner, will be for the priests, for he who found it does not know the regulation in its regard; if its owner is not found, they shall keep it.⁴¹⁵

For these private-property-holding Essene communities, there was a common fund to which contributions were made for the upkeep of the widows, orphans and the needy:

And this is the rule for the Many, to provide for all their needs: the salary of two days each month at least. They shall place it in the hand of the Inspector and of the judges. For it shall be given to the orphans and with it they shall strengthen the hand of the needy and the poor, and the elder who [is dying], and to the vagabond, and to the prisoner of a foreign people, and to the girl who has no protector, and to the unma[rried woman] who has no suitor; and for all the works

⁴¹⁴ C. Rabin, *Qumran Studies Scripta Judaica II* (London: OUP, 1957), pp. 22-36.

⁴¹⁵ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 40.

of the company, and [the house of the company shall not be deprived of its means] (CD 14.12b-17a).⁴¹⁶

These communities evidently embraced a married Essene population.⁴¹⁷ The evidence seems to suggest that in the marrying Essene order, where property was privately owned, a slightly different form of communism was practised, while the celibate community at Qumran practised complete economic communism of property. It may be that the married Essenes provided support for the celibate Essenes living in the wilderness.⁴¹⁸ Both Josephus and Philo indicate that there were Essenes, besides those at Qumran, who lived in towns and villages in large groups.⁴¹⁹ Josephus writes:

They occupy no one city of their own, but settle in large numbers in every town. On arrival of any of the sect from elsewhere, all the resources of the community are put at their disposal, just as if they were their own; and they enter the houses of men whom they have never seen before as though they were their most intimate friends. Consequently, they carry nothing whatever with them on their journeys, except arms as protection against brigands. In every city there is one of the order expressly appointed to attend to strangers, who provides them with raiment and other necessities....There is no buying or selling among themselves but each gives what he has to any in need and receives from him in exchange something useful to himself; they are, moreover, freely permitted to take anything from any of their brothers without making any return.⁴²⁰

Philo lauded the communal life of the Essenes, where everybody was cared for. If a man was taken ill, he was cared for at the common expense.⁴²¹ It was a community where all assets were pooled together to be enjoyed by all.

1QS 1.11-13a enjoin 'all those who freely devote themselves to His truth (to) bring all their knowledge, powers, and possessions into the Community of God' under the supervision of the מִבְּקֵר. There were clear instructions regarding the Qumran neophyte during his probationary period:

Every man, born of Israel, who freely pledges himself to join the Council of the Community shall be examined by the Guardian at the head of the congregation concerning his understanding and his deeds. If he is fitted to the discipline, he shall admit him into the Covenant that he may be converted to the truth and depart from all falsehood; and he shall instruct him in all the rules of the Community. And later, when he comes to stand before the Congregation, they shall all

⁴¹⁶ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 44.

⁴¹⁷ See §7.6 below.

⁴¹⁸ Betz & Riesner, *Jesus*, p. 136.

⁴¹⁹ Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.1; Schürer, *History* 2.563-71.

⁴²⁰ *War* 2.124-27; cf. *Refutation* 9.19-20.

⁴²¹ *Quod Omnis* 12.

deliberate his case, and according to the decision of the Council of the Congregation he shall either enter or depart (1QS 6.13b-16a).

During the first probationary year, the postulant was not required to surrender his possessions to the **מבקר**. He was prohibited from participating in the ceremonial celebrations of the community, until the second year of probation when he provisionally surrendered his property to the community (1QS 6.16b-21a).

Such provisional surrender meant that the property still belonged to the candidate. The community would not use it until the second year of his probation was successfully completed. This suggests that the community could return it to him if he chose to leave before attaining to full membership. The novice was allowed to merge his possessions with those of the community during the third and final probationary year:

But when the second year has passed, he shall be examined, and if it be his destiny, according to the judgement of the Congregation, to enter the Community, then he shall be inscribed among his brethren in the order of his rank for the Law, and for justice, and for the pure Meal; his property shall be merged and he shall offer his counsel and judgment to the Community (1QS 6.22b-23).

This phased entrance procedure may have been a means of ensuring a gradual integration of the novice into the community. Moreover, this system also allowed the new candidate more time to consider if he was capable of meeting the rigorous demands and the ethos of the community.

Any novice or member who was found deceiving in the declaration of his possessions was excluded from the community meal for one year and a reduction in his food ration for a certain period of time (1QS 6.24b-25). Neglect in the use of communal property was punishable by either restitution, a fine or penance (1QS 7.6-7).

The elaborate institution of the community of goods aimed to furnish proper facilities for all who had turned away from evil to follow holiness, purity and justice as revealed by God (1QS 5.1). In order to pursue this religious goal, the members were 'to eat in common, pray in common and deliberate in common' (1QS 6.2-3), living in a such a way as to 'seek God with a whole heart and soul' (1QS 1.1-2). In perfect obedience to the Torah and the prophets, they were to love one another and to share

with one another their knowledge and possessions, and to inherit the 'everlasting possession' that God had given them (1QS 11.7).⁴²²

7.3.2 Community of Goods in the Early Church

The Qumran institution of community of goods offers a parallel to the practice of the early Church. In the synoptic Gospels Jesus urges his disciples to renounce the acquisition of material assets in order to seek and proclaim the kingdom of God. The refusal of the rich young ruler to be included in Jesus' disciples shows the high degree of renunciation practised by this group (Mk 10.17-30 and par). The followers of Jesus were urged to renounce private property, distributing their belongings to the poor so that they could follow Jesus without any inhibition, and to rely on God to supply all their needs (Mk 1.16-20; 2.13-17; 10.17-30 and par; Lk 12.13-21, 33; cf. Q=Matt 6.25-34, 19-21//Lk 12.21-31). The fourth Evangelist suggests that the twelve disciples had a common purse with Judas as the treasurer (John 12.4-6; 13.29).

There are similarities between the common life of the Essenes and Jesus' description of those who do the will of his father as his true relations (Mk 3.35 and par), and his admonition to the disciples to live like brothers (Matt 23.8). Jesus and his followers, like the Essenes, had communal meals in anticipation of the messianic age, where there would be complete communal sharing in the kingdom of God. However, unlike Qumran, the communal meals in which Jesus participated were open to all (e.g. Mk 6.35-44; 8.1-10 and par; cf. Jesus' table-fellowship with some Pharisees and publicans, Mk 2.13-17 and par; Lk 7.36-50; 19.7).

Furthermore, Jesus had supporters, including married women, who provided for the disciples out of their resources (Lk 8.1-3), just as the married Essenes may have provided for those at Qumran. Jesus' friends at Bethany, Mary, Martha and Lazarus also welcomed him and his disciples and served them (Lk 10.38-42; John 11.1-5).

The wording of the 'mission charge' of the twelve by Jesus is, in many ways, reminiscent of what Josephus says about the Essenes, when they travel from one place

⁴²² Martínez, *DSST*, p. 18.

to another in the passage cited above (Mk 6.8-9; Matt 10.9-10; Lk 9.3-4; 10.4). While the OT model of the prophetic call of Elijah and Elisha may form a possible background to this renunciation by Jesus and his disciples,⁴²³ it is also possible that Jesus might have been influenced by the Qumran community of goods.⁴²⁴

According to Josephus, apart from arms to protect himself on the way, the Essene carried absolutely nothing on his journey since his needs would be met by his hosts.⁴²⁵ In Mark 6.8-9, Jesus sends the twelve out on their missionary endeavours with specific instructions: 'He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics'. In their accounts, Matthew and Luke differ from Mark by forbidding the twelve to take anything at all, including the staff and sandals which Mark allows (Matt 10.9-10; Lk 9.3; 10.4). It may be that the original charge was not to take extra sandals, which has perhaps been rendered ambiguously in Matthew and especially in Luke, where the charge is split into two passages.

Regarding the question of carrying a staff, Mark agrees with the Essene practice by allowing it, while Matthew and Luke forbid it. It could be that the first and the third Evangelists omitted this reference since it appears to go contrary to the injunction of non-resistance (Matt 5.38-43). It is significant to note that during Jesus' final fellowship with the disciples, on the eve of his betrayal in Jerusalem, the disciples had already armed themselves with two swords for self-defence. However, in both Luke and Matthew Jesus condemns the action by one of the disciples who severs off the ear of the slave of the high priest, it is only in Luke that the ear is healed (Lk 22.35-38, 50; Matt 26.51-54). Thus, we see here a striking similarity between the Essene practice of taking only the barest minimum of provisions on a journey, including a staff for self-defence, and the missionary charge of Jesus to his disciples.

It appears that, like the twelve disciples, the Essenes who had been travelling with hardly any provisions at all from town to town, were probably individual Essenes

⁴²³ Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* trans J. C. G. Greig, ed. J. Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), pp. 16-18.

⁴²⁴ D. L. Mealand, 'Community of Goods at Qumran', *ThZ* 31 (1975), 129-39.

⁴²⁵ §7.3.

with administrative functions, perhaps the overseers mentioned in CD. These individuals were a common sight on the dusty roads of Palestine as they travelled from one Essene camp to another discharging their duties. In their missionary thrust, they also employed the Essene categories of community of property and the frugal mode of travel. It is therefore not surprising that after the death of Jesus, when the disciples regroup once more, we witness a return to the way of life which they had previously practised in the presence of their master.

The third Evangelist gives us a vivid account of the strongest parallel to the Essene practice of the community of goods' in the primitive Jerusalem Christian community. In Acts 2.44-45 and 4.32, 34, Luke reports that πάντες δὲ οἱ πιστεύοντες ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινὰ (2.44). Here it was not just the twelve, but all who joined the community who sold their possessions and brought the proceeds to be a common store for the good of all. Luke further suggests that 'there was not a needy (ἐνδεής) person among them' (4.34-35).⁴²⁶ In these statements, we find summaries of the overall history and life of the earliest Church as Luke perceived it.⁴²⁷ Here Luke praises the early Church, combining his own literary prowess with some fixed literary motifs found in both the Hellenistic (in particular the Pythagorean communism) and the Essene ideals of community of property.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ It has been suggested that a number of the phrases here, for example, πάντα κοινά, allude to the Hellenistic *topos* concerning friendship. This phrase is identical to the proverb, 'friends hold all things in common', τοῖς φίλοις πάντα κοινά, which is found in the literature of the Greek philosophers and political thinkers, notably, Plato, Aristotle and Plutarch. Plato, *Republic* 449C; *Critias* 110C-D; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, esp. Books VIII and IX; *Politics* 1263A; Plutarch, *On Brotherly Love* (491) 21. See L. K. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles Sacra Pagina* vol 5 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), pp.56-63. The Hellenistic philosophic life, especially the esoteric sect founded by Pythagoras of Samosa in Croton in Magna Graecia, in the sixth century B.C., is close to the Essene communism. See B. J. Capper, 'Panta koina: A Study of Earliest Christian Community of Goods in its Hellenistic and Jewish Contexts', Ph.D. Thesis Cambridge University, 1985.

⁴²⁷ H. J. Cadbury, 'The Summaries of Acts', in F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1933), 5.392-402.

⁴²⁸ J. M. Dupont, *Salvation of the Gentiles* trans J. Keating (NY: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 85-102; D. L. Mealand, 'Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II-IV', *JTS* 28 (1977), 96-99; M. Wilcox, *The Semitisms of Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), pp. 93-100. Hengel has argued persuasively of Luke's knowledge of the geographical conditions of both Palestine and Syria, which suggests that this author may have visited Palestine and personally heard of the organisation of the Essene communities. —*Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1983), pp. 97-128.

The story of Tabitha's (Dorcas) death at Joppa gives an echo of the community of goods similar to that of the Essenes. Peter, acting in the capacity of a *מבקר*-type officer, was called to minister to a group of mourning widows, who showed him the 'coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them' (Acts 9.36-43). It is also possible that the night-time prayer-meetings (Acts 12.1-5, 12; cf. 4.42) were regular nightly gatherings in which the sharing of communal meals took place.⁴²⁹

7.3.2.1 *The Story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5.1-11)*

In this episode Luke gives us a picture of the consequences arising from both the positive and negative actions regarding the common ownership of property practised by the early Church. The story also underlines the authority vested in the twelve as overseers of the community by the power of God. It is demonstrated below that this practice is structurally reminiscent of the kind of organised community of goods found in Qumran. There are so many strong parallels between the two communities that, in spite of some obvious differences, we can postulate that the early Church did practise a community of property which was essentially similar to that of the Essenes.

Before recounting the story of Ananias and Sapphira, Luke first introduces the fidelity of Barnabas in the context of the community of goods (Acts 4.36-37; cf. 9.27; 15.12-36). Barnabas submits to the authority of the twelve by returning the proceeds of the sale of his field to the common purse. Barnabas' faithfulness is contrasted with the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira. The couple failed to recognise that they were lying to the Holy Spirit when they pretended to have given all the proceeds from the sale of their property while withholding a portion of it (5.1-3). The dire consequence of this fraud was to strengthen the authority of the twelve over the community and to evoke fear among all those who heard it (5.4-11).

The details of Peter's accusation and the progression of the story reveal a striking structural similarity between this community and the Qumran Essenes. First, Peter told Ananias that he had lied by keeping back part of the proceeds from the sale of the land

⁴²⁹ Capper, 'Panta koina', pp. 237-40.

(verse 3). Secondly, the series of questions in 5.4 suggest that Ananias (and, of course, all candidates for admission into the Christian community of property in Jerusalem) had to surrender voluntarily his property on a provisional basis at first, like the Qumran postulant.⁴³⁰ Peter's rhetorical question in verse 4a, 'While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own?' suggests that at this initial stage of his probation, Ananias had absolute control over his property, while his fitness for the community was observed by the twelve. According to Capper, Peter's question would refer to the introductory catechetical phase of Ananias' entrance into the community.⁴³¹

The second part of the question, 'And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?' (verse 4b), would indicate the stage where Ananias had to sell his property and hand in the proceeds to the community. This phase corresponds to the second year of probation of the Qumran neophyte, where 'his property and earnings shall be handed over to the Bursar of the Congregation who shall register it to his account and shall not spend it for the Congregation' (1QS 6.19b-20a). Ananias still remained the sole owner of his property till his final decision to commute it into the community of property.

It is against this background that Ananias' fraud and guilt should be seen. He had agreed to go into the final phase of his novitiate, where all property was held in common. For if he was still at stage one, then Peter's question in verse 4b was superfluous. The fact that he brought part of the proceeds (verse 2) meant that he had agreed to join the communal sharing of property. Throughout his probation, Ananias had been properly educated about the requirements of the community, and the emotional difficulties involved with the renunciation of his private property. Yet he subtly decided to defraud. This is what Peter meant by his third rhetorical question: 'How is that you have contrived this deed in your heart?' (5.4c). Ananias' action not only evinced premeditated deception, but also an infringement of the whole ethic of the early Christian community (4.32, 34; 2.44-45). Later Peter explained to Sapphira that she and her husband could not engage in the fraudulent activity of holding back some part of their property while still hoping to partake of the community life (5.9).

⁴³⁰ Graystone, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 31-34.

⁴³¹ Capper, 'The Interpretation of Acts 5.4', *JSNT* 19 (1983), 117-31.

Thirdly, this story indicates that once a commitment had been made to the community of property, it was a serious offence to engage in any act of fraud. It may be instructive here to recall the Essenes' legislation for any committed member who deliberately lied about his possessions. He was excluded from the 'pure meal' of the community for a year and asked to do penance by forfeiting a portion of his ration (1QS 6.24-25). This was a serious offence of betrayal and an infringement on the vows to uphold an important foundational principle of the community. This punishment, in effect, was a demotion to the status of a new candidate. Ananias and Sapphira's fate appears to be harsher and less predictable because of Luke's introduction of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, which was freely at work in the early Christian community. The fear which the miraculous deaths of Ananias and Sapphira evoked could be interpreted as a warning to prospective candidates who were intending to join the early Church's community of property (5.11).

If the above reconstruction is right, then the model which naturally suggests itself as a possible illuminating parallel to explain Ananias' and Sapphira's crime is the phased entrance procedure employed by the sectaries for postulants who sought admission to the Qumran community of property.

While Pythagorean sources may throw some light on this concept of provisional surrender of goods, it is Qumran which provides an illuminating background to the Ananias and Sapphira story. The known OT parallels are fraught with difficulties; for example, while the consecration of the Nazirites shows points of contact with the Qumran piety, there are no known Nazirite communities, nor is there any suggestion that the Nazirites renounced property. The closely-knit company of the 'sons of the prophets' who lived under the tutelage of Elijah and Elisha, may offer a precedent for both the Essene and early Church's practice. But the financial insolvency of a widow of 'a son of a prophet', (2 Kings 4.1-7) suggests a rudimentary and less sophisticated organisation than that of the Essenes.⁴³²

⁴³² Steinman, *Saint John*, pp. 110f; Capper, 'The Interpretation of Acts 5.4', 117-31.

We have noted above the affinity between Luke's special tradition, particularly Lk 1-2, and the DSS, and the suggestion that this tradition goes back to conservative Jewish Christians in Judea.⁴³³ It is further argued that part of the tradition behind Acts 1-12 belonged to the same Hebrew substratum that lies behind the Lucan special tradition. According to Riesner, Luke's picture of the first community in Jerusalem (which remained attached to the holy city, the OT and the law, hoped for the repentance of Israel, criticised wealth and practised community of goods) was not simply an idealisation for his sophisticated Hellenistic readers, but shows significant parallels with 'Essenic customs than to the utopian visions of the Greek philosophers'.⁴³⁴

It is often supposed that the Essenic-type communal living among the primitive Judaeo-Christians in Jerusalem proved a failure when the Parousia failed to come. However, as Capper has rightly suggested, the practice came to an end because the group's assets, centrally located, became vulnerable in the time of persecution (e.g. the persecution around A. D. 44, when the disciple James was martyred; cf. Heb 10.32-34).⁴³⁵ The famine under Claudius during the forties may have also affected the communal practice of the primitive Church (Acts 11.28). It is also possible that the community of goods in Jerusalem was a practice that simply became unworkable in the new expansionary phase of Christianity into the Gentile world (cf. Acts 6.1).⁴³⁶ The strong continuing emphasis on hospitality in the NT and Paul's collection for the 'poor' in Jerusalem may be vestigial of this practice.⁴³⁷

7.3.2.2 *Summary*

To conclude, the primitive Church in Jerusalem practised community of goods, being a continuation of the earlier practice of Jesus and the twelve. Our investigation

⁴³³ See §5.6.2.

⁴³⁴ Riesner, 'Luke's Special Tradition', 44-51.

⁴³⁵ Capper further posits that the Jerusalem ascetic tradition was absorbed into the sect of the Ebionites, whose name reminds us of the 'Poor' who benefited from Paul's collection. —'Panta koina', 242-46.

⁴³⁶ Hengel, *Earliest Christianity*, pp. 71-80. Some even suggest that 'a great many of the priests (who) were obedient to the faith' (Acts 6.7) were Essenes who converted to Christianity. See Riesner, 'Luke's Special Tradition', 50 for further bibliography.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Rom 12.13; Gal 2.10; 1 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.7-8; 1 Pet 4.9; Heb 13.1-2, 16; 3 John 5-7; Rom 15.25-29.

has shown that the community of property in the early Jerusalem Church bears close resemblance to an analogous institution at Qumran.

The above alternative reconstruction of the story of Ananias and Sapphira offers a plausible explanation for Luke's telescoped account. It also offers a fresh look at the evidence in light of the DSS. Ananias and Sapphira passed through some sort of phased probation similar to Qumran in the process of relinquishing the private ownership of their property to the Christian community in Jerusalem.

Finally, the vulnerability of the central location of the resources of the primitive Jerusalem community during the time of persecution, the ravages of famine and the growth of Christianity into Gentile territory, rendered the practice of the community of goods ineffective for the *new phase of the early Church*.

7.4 Discipline

7.4.1 *Discipline in Essenism*

Another area of correspondence between the Essenes and the early Church is the manner in which both administered discipline. It has been noted above that once admitted to full membership, the new member of the community was assigned to a regular rank or place. He was expected to attend all meetings and to take his place according to his rank. The order of speaking in the assembly was also prescribed, and each member who had something to say was expected to act in accordance with the rules. Thus, obedience to the rules of the community was strictly enforced.

The DSS also set out the different offences and their corresponding punishments. For example, if any member pronounced the divine name, whether by commission or omission, he was expelled from the community (1QS 6.27-7.2). Since the law of Moses formed the bedrock of the community's existence, as in all Judaism, any infringement of the law exacted severe punishment, which among the sectaries was total expulsion from the community. Even though there was some leniency if the offence was committed inadvertently, the offender still incurred a long probation of over two years (1QS 8.21-26).

A list of offences and corresponding discipline meted out accordingly appear in 1QS 6.24-7.25; 8.16b-9.2, and in CD 14.18-22. There are instructions relating to the internal life of the community and the disciplining of wayward members. In 1QS 5.25-6.2 we read:

They shall rebuke one another in truth, humility, and charity. Let no man address his companion with anger, or ill-temper, or obduracy, or with envy prompted by the spirit of wickedness. Let him not hate him [because of his uncircumcised] heart, but let him rebuke him on the very same day lest he incur guilt because of him. And furthermore, let no man accuse his companion before the Congregation without having first admonished him in the presence of witnesses. These are the ways in which all of them shall walk, each man with his companion, wherever they dwell.

This passage envisages a three-fold approach in the reproof of a fellow member: first, in private; secondly, before witnesses; and thirdly, before the full members of the *community*. It appears that these regulations were directed particularly at the Essene settlements in towns and cities of Judea, rather than that at Qumran.

In the so-called 'penitential code' (1QS 6.24-7.25), there is legislation concerning interpersonal relations. The offences listed are miscellaneous in character, and the corresponding punishments also vary in severity, ranging from total expulsion to a ten-day penance. Some of the offences mentioned include a calculated attempt to lie in matters of property, showing disrespect to superiors, blaspheming, slandering a neighbour, making unfounded complaints about the *community*, knowingly and without cause insulting and deceiving one's neighbour, and leaving the community after being a member for ten years.

The code of discipline in 1QS 8.16b-9.2 falls into two parts.⁴³⁸ The first part, made up of lines 16b-19, is preoccupied with the case of a man who presumptuously flouts the rules of the community. The punishment meted out to this offender was to expel him temporarily from the community until he had given clear proof of his repentance. Among the highlights of the second part (8.20-9.2) is the legislation that anyone who presumptuously or negligently 'transgresses one word of the Law of Moses, on any other point, shall be expelled from the Council of the Community and shall return no more' (8.22-23; cf. CD 20.2-13). However, if he acted inadvertently,

⁴³⁸ Knibb, *Qumran Community*, pp. 127-40.

he was excluded for a couple of years, and was recalled into the community if his deeds were found satisfactory (cf. CD 12.3-4).

There were also clear guidelines to be followed if an offended brother intended to seek redress:

And concerning the saying, You shall not take vengeance on the children of your people, nor bear any rancour against them (Lev. xix, 18), if any member of the Covenant accuses his companion without first rebuking before witnesses; if he denounces him in the heat of his anger or reports him to his elders to make him look contemptible, he is one that takes vengeance and bears rancour, although it is expressly written, He takes vengeance upon His adversaries and bears rancour against His enemies (Nah. i, 2). If he holds his peace towards him from one day to another, and thereafter speaks of him in the heat of his anger, he testifies against himself concerning a capital matter because he has not fulfilled the commandment of God which tells him: *You shall rebuke your companion and not be burdened with sin because of him* [Lev. xix, 17] (CD 9.2-8a).

Members were to seek each other's welfare: they were to eschew any act that might cause offence to a fellow member; if any misunderstanding arose, steps were taken to rectify the situation immediately; they were admonished not to carry ill feelings, hatred, or bitterness into the following day (CD 6.21b-7.3a).

No offender is punished without properly establishing his guilt. To ensure that the offender is treated fairly, two witnesses are always required to prove his misdeed (CD 9.20-23). All the witnesses must be above reproach: 'No man who has wilfully transgressed any commandment shall be declared a trustworthy witness against his companion until he is purified and able to return' (CD 10.1-3).

7.4.2 Discipline in the Early Church

The early Church exhibits many of the elements noted in the Essenes' code of discipline. First, the Christian community was also concerned with order. This is exemplified in the principle enunciated by Paul that 'all things should be done decently and in order' (1 Cor 14.40). The Essenes' conviction that all internal squabbles, disputes and controversies should be settled within the community in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down is similar to Paul's admonition to the Corinthians in which he grieved over their inability to settle their own disputes without recourse to lawsuits (1 Cor 6.1-8). He was deeply disturbed that the Corinthian Christians were

allowing unbelievers to adjudicate their cases, when they were destined for the highest honour of judging not only the world but also angels.

Paul's admonition to the Ephesians, 'Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger' (Eph 4.26), is reminiscent of similar advice to the sectaries against carrying a grudge into the following day (CD 6.21b-7.3a). Jesus was even more emphatic: 'But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says "You fool!" shall be liable to the hell of fire' (Matt 5.22).

There is an interesting parallel between Jesus' directives for the treatment of an offending brother in Matt 18.15-17, and the rules for dealing with an analogous situation among the Essenes (cf. CD 9.2-8). The Matthean passage is often seen as a guide to Church leaders on disciplinary action. But notice that the passage is couched in terms of an injunction to members on how to deal with an offender in the congregation.

As in Qumran, the Christian is not to ignore the fault of an offender. The one who is offended should go to the erring brother and try to resolve the matter amicably. The aim of the first visit is for the wronged brother not only to correct, but also to win (κερδαίνω) the offender (verse 15). This presupposes that the initial meeting must be in truth and love (cf. 'speaking the truth in love' Eph 4.15; and 'each should reproach his fellow in truth, meekness and in compassionate love for the man' 1QS 5.25).⁴³⁹

If the matter remains unresolved at the initial meeting, then the next recourse must involve one or two other brothers. The presence of these witnesses not only adds force to the persuasion of the wronged brother, but also establishes the veracity of his case (ἵνα ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων ἢ τριῶν σταθῇ πᾶν ῥῆμα, Matt 18.16). Some have found here an allusion to Deut 19.15: 'One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offence he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'. But the stipulation in Deuteronomy relates to a judicial trial. The principle enacted in the OT is that multiple

⁴³⁹ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 9.

testimony is more credible and convincing. The situation in Matthew, however, is not the same as in Deuteronomy. The ἕνα ἢ δύο in Matthew may not necessarily be witnesses of the original offence. The situation is more akin to 1QS 5.25-6.2.

If the matter is not resolved at the second stage, the offended brother may report it to the Church (εἰπὲ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, Matt 18.17). At this last stage if the offender remains recalcitrant, the offended brother is allowed to sever any fraternal relations with him and to call him a pagan (ὁ ἔθνικός, a Gentile, or uncircumcised) and a tax collector (ὁ τελώνης).⁴⁴⁰ Vermes translates 1QS 5.26: 'Let him not hate him [because of his uncircumcised] heart, but let him rebuke him on the very same day'. By the impenitent member being referred to as a Gentile, or an uncircumcised pagan, he is, in effect, to be looked upon as a sinner whose lot is no longer with the elect.

The Essene code of ethics is further paralleled by Paul's instruction regarding the issue of immorality among the Corinthians. On hearing the news that a man was 'living with his father's wife', Paul issued a directive for this immoral person to be expelled from the Corinthian congregation, to be delivered 'to Satan for the destruction of the flesh' (1 Cor 5.1-5). Here the offender was to be excommunicated from the Church into the realm of Satan (cf. Col 1.13-14; Eph 2.12; 1 John 5.19), though Paul, unlike Qumran, may also have in mind physical consequences resulting from spiritual failings (cf. 1 Cor 11.30; 2 Cor 12.7). For Paul this discipline was remedial in order for the offender's spirit to 'be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus' (1 Cor 5.5).

7.6 Celibacy and Divorce

7.6.1 Celibacy and Divorce in Essenism

The question of whether the Essenes were married or celibate has exercised scholars since the discovery of the DSS. Studies that have concentrated solely on 1QS have revealed a group which was predominantly or exclusively masculine in outlook. However, archaeology has uncovered the skeletons of a few women and children in a

⁴⁴⁰ The Gospel evidence suggests that the term 'tax collector' was a pejorative and abusive title (Matt 5.46; 18.17). See T. E. Schmidt, 'Tax Collector', *DJG*, pp. 804-807.

cemetery at Khirbet Qumran.⁴⁴¹ Furthermore, there are indications and, in some cases, explicit references in the DSS where family life as well as celibacy are presupposed.⁴⁴²

In CD 7.6b-9a there are instructions to the Essenes living in towns or camps:

And if they live in camps according to the rule of the Land, marrying and begetting children, they shall walk according to the Law and according to the statute concerning binding vows, according to the rule of the Law which says, *Between a man and his wife and between a father and his son*' (Num xxx, 17).

This passage refers to both urban dwelling and non-celibate Essene communities, and those who become members through marriage, or birth. Both categories are required, in spite of living in the midst of their fellow non-Essene Jews and Gentile neighbours, to show absolute obedience to the Mosaic law and to live as a family unit.

Reference to both the celibate and non-celibate Essenes in the DSS is supported by the classical sources. For example, Josephus writes about the Essenes:

they neither bring wives into the community nor do they own slaves, since they believe that the latter practice contributes to injustice and that the former opens the way to a source of dissension. Instead they live by themselves and perform menial tasks for one another.⁴⁴³

This description is a clear reference to the celibate group among the Essenes. Elsewhere, Josephus discusses the non-celibate order of the Essenes which did not condemn marriage:

There is yet another order of Essenes, which, while at one with the rest in its mode of life, customs and regulations, differ from them in its views on marriage. They think that those who decline to marry cut off the chief function of life, the propagation of the race, and, what is more, that, were they to adopt the same view, the whole race would very quickly die out. They give their wives, however, a three years' probation, and only marry them after they have by three periods of purification given proof of fecundity. They have no intercourse with them during pregnancy, thus showing that their motive in marrying is not self-indulgence but the procreation of children.⁴⁴⁴

However, both Philo and Pliny the Elder extolled Essene celibacy. Philo states that 'no Essene takes a wife, because a wife is a selfish creature, excessively jealous and adept at beguiling the morals of her husband and seducing him by her continued

⁴⁴¹ de Vaux, 'Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls', *Antiquity* 37 (1963), 126-27; Callaway, *Qumran Community*, p. 42.

⁴⁴² See §7.3 above.

⁴⁴³ *Ant* 18.21; cf. *Refutation* 9.18.

⁴⁴⁴ *War* 2.160-61; 2.120-21.

impostures'.⁴⁴⁵ According to Philo, this selfish motive was regarded by the Essenes as unhealthy for the purity of the community.

CD provides for the non-celibate communities of the Essene movement. There are unambiguous warnings forbidding members from engaging in fornication and other vices: 'A man shall seek his brother's well-being and shall not sin against his near kin. They shall keep from fornication according to the statute' (CD 6.21b-7.2). In CD 5.6-11 the prohibition against fornication is continued with regard to incest by extending the biblical legislation of Lev 18.13, which prohibits aunt-nephew relations, to include intercourse between uncle-nephew (cf. 11QT 66.12-17). Fornication is one of the lethal sins mentioned together with wealth and defilement of the temple – these are described as the three nets of Belial (CD 4.15-17).

In the elaboration of the three nets of Belial (CD 4.20-5.2a), the commentator concentrates on the issues of bigamy, incest and divorce, even though the last issue has been debated:

Mic 2:6 'Assuredly he will preach' – are caught twice in fornication: by taking two wives in their lives, even though the principle of creation is *Gen 1:27* 'male and female he created them'. And the ones who went into the ark *Gen 7:9* 'went in two by two into the ark'. About the prince it is written: *Deut 17:17* 'He should not multiply wives to himself' (CD 4.20-5.2a; cf 5.3-11).⁴⁴⁶

Notice that the author adduces three proofs for the scriptural ban on polygamy: (i) God originally created a couple, Adam and Eve; (ii) both humans and animals entered the ark in pairs; and (iii) the injunction 'he should not multiply wives to himself'.

The primary concern for purity among the Essenes is reiterated with stipulations related to fornication in the context of marriage and sexual behaviour. Members were urged to keep away from fornication and all forms of debauchery (CD 7.1-3; 8.4-5;

⁴⁴⁵ *Hypothetica* 11.14-17; *Nat Hist* 5.15 (73); Leaney, *Rule of Qumran*, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁴⁶ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 36. For further discussion, see Knibb, *Qumran Community*, p. 43; B. Z. Wacholder, *The Dawn of Qumran: The Sectarian Torah and the Teacher of Righteousness* MHUC 8 (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1983), pp. 16-17, 124-27; J. R. Mueller, 'The Temple Scroll and the Gospel Divorce Texts', *RQ* 10 (1980), 247-56; Fitzmyer, 'The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some Palestinian Evidence', *ThS* 37 (1976), 197-226; Vermes, 'Sectarian Matrimonial Halakhah in the Damascus Rule', *JJS* 25 (1974), 197-202; Burrows, *More Light*, p.98.

19.17). Any member who fornicated was expelled from the community and never to return.⁴⁴⁷

There is a sectarian matrimonial legislation against marriage to non-members:

[Deut 27:18 'Accursed whoever leads a blind man astray from the path', and also: 'He is not to give, for he is not ready for her',] because he, two different things [..like a bull and an ass, and woollen and linen clothing together] (4Q271[4QD^f] 9.2-3).⁴⁴⁸

He shall not marry as wife any daughter of the nations, but shall take a wife for himself from his father's house, from his father's family. He shall not take another wife in addition to her, for she alone shall be with him all the time of her life. But if she dies, he may marry another from his father's house, from his family (11QT 57.15b-19a; 56.18).

Any member who divorces must inform the מִבְּקָר, presumably to obtain his permission, just as his approval must be sought in marriage (CD 13.17; 4QD^f 9.6-7).⁴⁴⁹ According to 1QSa 1.6-11a, instruction in the community, especially for children, begins at the age of ten, since the next important event of marriage is not allowed until the age of twenty.

We conclude that the DSS provides for both celibate and non-celibate Essenes. Among the married Essenes the issue of sexual relations defined the boundaries of the sectarian lifestyle. Polygamy, bigamy and incest were clearly forbidden, while divorce was generally prohibited, though it seems it was permitted only with the approval of the מִבְּקָר. Among the sexual offences, fornication was considered a major violation of the Essene ethic.

7.5.2 Celibacy and Divorce in the Early Church

Though some have argued to the contrary, there are parallels to CD 4.20b-5.2a in Jesus' condemnation of divorce and remarriage. Jesus' reference to God's original purpose in marriage, where man and woman would come together to 'become one' – 'but from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female"' (Mk 10.2-12,

⁴⁴⁷ See J. M. Baumgarten, 'The Cave 4 Versions of the Qumran Penal Code', *JJS* 43 (1992), 268-76, esp. 270 for this evidence. Cf. Jub 20.4; 41.25.

⁴⁴⁸ Martínez, *DSST*, p. 68.

⁴⁴⁹ Martínez, *DSST*, pp. 44, 68-9. For further discussion, see J. Kampen, 'The Matthean Divorce Texts Reexamined', in *New Qumran Studies*, pp. 149-67.

esp. verse 6; cf. Matt 5.31-32; 19.3-12) – also quotes Gen 1.27; 7.7-9 as proof-texts. These words of Jesus are spoken in the context of divorce, recalling the law of Moses which required a formal certificate as proof of the dissolution of the marriage (Deut 24.1-4).⁴⁵⁰ Here the Mosaic law prohibits a reunion of a divorced couple, after the woman has remarried and her second marriage has come to grief either through divorce or the death of her second husband.

Mk 10.2-12 (and par) suggest that the contemporaries of Jesus have misunderstood and misapplied Deut 24.1-4 as permitting a husband to put away his wife.⁴⁵¹ Jesus' response reaches back to first principles: it was because of human weakness ('for your hardness of hearts') that Moses gave this instruction; neither here nor elsewhere in the OT is divorce explicitly approved; God's original purpose in creation is that marriage should be an unbroken life-long union (Mk 10.5-9 and par). Jesus then points out that whoever divorces his wife (or her partner, in Mk only) to marry another commits adultery (Mk 10.11-12; Lk 16.18; cf. 1 Cor 7.10-11).

In Matthew there is an exception clause, *παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας* (Matt 5.32; 19.9), to Jesus' prohibition of divorce.⁴⁵² Jesus further warns that 'everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Matt 5.27-28; cf. CD 2.16; 1QS 1.6). As noted above, fornication, which included incest, divorce and polygamy, was a serious sexual offence among the Essenes. This understanding may lie behind the Matthean texts.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ S. E. Johnson, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* 2nd edn. BNTC (London: A. & C. Black, 1972), pp. 168-71.

⁴⁵¹ P. Winter, 'Sadoqite Fragments IV 20, 21 and the Exegesis of Genesis 1.27 in Late Judaism', *ZAW* 68 (1956), 71-84; *Ant.* 4.253; *mish. Gittin* 9.10; R. T. France, *Matthew* TNTC 1 (Leicester: IVP, 1985), pp. 122-24.

⁴⁵² Luz, *Matthew* 1-13, pp. 121-26; Carson, *Matthew* EBC 8, pp. 410-19; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964), pp. 104f.

⁴⁵³ The term *πορνεία*, according to the LXX, is a translation of the Hebrew *זנות*, which also means 'fornication' or 'whoredom'. See E. Hatch and H. A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the other Versions of the Old Testament* vol 2 (Graz-Austria: Akademische Druck-Verlagsanstalt, 1954), pp. 1194-95. For further discussion of the Matthean divorce texts, see Meier, *Law and History*, pp. 140-50; Kampen, 'The Matthean Divorce Texts Reexamined', 149-67; Fitzmyer, 'The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some Palestinian Evidence', *TS* 37 (1976), 197-226; K. Schubert, 'The Sermon on the Mount and the Qumran Texts', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 118-28. Some do not see any significance in the parallels between Matthew and the DSS, while others postulate a common apocalyptic background to explain the parallels. See Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 208-56; A. Ito, 'Matthew and the Community of the Dead Sea Scrolls', *JSNT* 48 (1992), 23-42.

Furthermore, while Jesus endorses the ideal of marriage and disapproves of divorce and polygamy, according to Matthew, he does not discourage celibacy, especially if it is practised 'for the sake of the kingdom of heaven' (Matt 19.12). It is striking that Jesus himself, like the Baptist, led a celibate life (Mk 1.12-13 and par).⁴⁵⁴ Paul and some within the Corinthian congregation were celibates, though marriage was generally regarded as the norm (1 Cor 7). Paul's permission to the Corinthians to divorce 'if the unbelieving partner desires to separate' may be understood in relation to the centrality of purity in Essenism which forbade marriage to a non-member.

However, while the meaning of the statement in CD 4.21 approximates to Jesus' interpretation of the Mosaic law on divorce, there are differences between them. First, the intensity of Jesus' condemnation of divorce in the synoptic Gospels in comparison with CD is evident. Secondly, Jesus' condemnation of divorce applies to the right of a woman to divorce her husband, a right hitherto unrecognised in Judaism (in Mark only). By putting both husband and wife under the same moral obligation, Jesus, as far as divorce is concerned, raises the status and dignity of women. Thirdly, while Jesus himself, Paul and others were celibates, marriage was the norm in the early Church, whereas the celibate order within the Essene movement perceived marriage and sexual relations to be incompatible with their aims and objectives.

7.6 Conclusion

The above examination of the internal structure of both the Essene and the early Christian communities has brought to light a number of interesting results:

(a) Both communities were predominantly oligarchic, while at the same time maintaining a democratic order. The underlying aim in both conditions was to foster unity among members.

(b) A striking parallel between the two communities is expressed by the 'Council of the Community' (twelve men, including three priests) of Qumran and the twelve

⁴⁵⁴ Bagatti, *Church from the Circumcision*, pp. 54-60.

apostles in the early Church. Important decisions relating to the smooth running of each community, and the welfare of its members, were taken by the respective college.

(c) There is a remarkable similarity between the Qumran economic communism and the early Church community of goods. The evidence suggests that the early Church's practice goes back to the earlier practice of Jesus and the twelve disciples. The community of goods in the early Church goes beyond the rudimentary and less sophisticated organisation of a similar practice in the OT, and Qumran offers the clearest Jewish antecedent and a plausible matrix for the early Church's communism. The story of Ananias and Sapphira, though telescoped, shares a lot in common with the phased probationary procedure for the Qumran postulant.

(d) The Essenes and the early Church practised both celibacy and marriage. The study has shown some correspondence between the DSS and Jesus' teaching on divorce in the synoptic Gospels. Like the Essenes, Jesus re-states the principle of creation in which male and female are to unite to 'become one' (Matt 19.5; Mk 10.8). Jesus underlines the indissolubility of the union and the abhorrence of polygamy. He further reinterprets the law of Moses regarding divorce which, according to him, was permitted because of human weakness. Originally it was not part of creation.

PART III

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

8. JOHN'S PERCEPTION OF JESUS

8.1 Introduction

Our primary goal in this thesis has been to take a fresh look at the evidence concerning the relationship between JB and Jesus and to assess how Jesus was influenced by John. In approaching this question, the first part of our argument has been via the DSS. We have argued the plausibility of the view that after his birth into an old priestly family, John was brought up at Qumran, and that this community provided the matrix and provenance for his ideas. This is not a new idea, but we have attempted to establish and systematise the argument with force and evidence.

The second part of our argument has demonstrated how much the early Church had in common with the Essenes – much more than is often recognised. Here we have shown the remarkable affinities between the two movements, in spite of some obvious differences. It could simply be coincidental that both John and the early Church have a great deal in common with the Essenes, but in view of (i) the NT testimony of John's influence on the beginnings of Christianity, and (ii) the fact that the early Church was a Baptist movement, it seems likely that there is a significant continuity from the Essenes to John to the early Church. But, if so, where does Jesus fit in? *Prima facie* one might suppose that Jesus should also fit into that continuity, leading us to think of a development from Qumran to JB to Jesus to the early Church. There are some problems with this view, notably that Jesus (according to the synoptists) does not seem to be a Baptist.

Consequently, in this part of the thesis we present a re-examination of the texts concerning John and Jesus. It is interesting to note that most of the existing discussion regarding the question of the relationship between John and Jesus has proceeded along

two parallel lines: what did John think of Jesus, and what was Jesus' perception of John?⁴⁵⁵ These two questions are looked at in this chapter and the next respectively.

According to all the four Evangelists, John's eschatological proclamation began with the announcement of an anticipated figure. The Gospel evidence indicates that this expectation was fulfilled in Jesus. However, it is possible that John himself and his first-century Jewish audience understood this message in a different way, and that the Evangelists selected and shaped their presentation of John's proclamation according to their belief about how it was fulfilled. Nevertheless, we should not despair prematurely. Our task here is to consider closely what John says about the coming figure as presented by the Evangelists, and how far their accounts may be taken, within a reasonable degree of probability, as echoes of what John actually proclaimed.

8.2 A Synopsis of the Gospel Evidence

John's proclamation about the coming figure is found in the following versions: Mk 1.7-8; Q=Lk 3.16-17// Matt 3.11-12; Lk 3.15, 18; John 1.26-27, 29-34 (cf. Acts 13.25; 19.4; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue* 49.3; 88.7). A juxtaposition of the different accounts may elucidate their common and distinctive elements:⁴⁵⁶

Matt 3.11-12	Mk 1.7-8	Lk 3.15-18	John 1.26-27
		Προσδοκῶντος δὲ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ διαλογιζομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου, μήποτε αὐτὸς εἴη ὁ Χριστός, ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων πᾶσιν ὁ Ἰωάννης, Ἐγὼ μὲν <u>ὑδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς</u> .	ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰωάννης λέγων· <u>Ἐγὼ βαπτίζω ἐν</u> <u>ὑδατι</u> · μέσος ὑμῶν ἕστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε, ὁ ὀπίσω μου <u>ἐρχόμενος</u> , οὗ οὐκ
ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου <u>ἐρχόμενος</u>	<u>Ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός</u> <u>μου ὀπίσω μου</u> , οὗ οὐκ	<u>ἔρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερός</u> <u>μου</u> , οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς λῦσαι	

⁴⁵⁵ As a representative view of this, see J. C. O'Neill, *Messiah: Six Lectures on the Ministry of Jesus*. The Cunningham Lectures 1975-76 (Cambridge: Cochrane Press, 1980), pp. 1-12.

⁴⁵⁶ The underlined text refers to what is common to three or all four Evangelists – here minor variations as a result of grammar, word order, and style are overlooked; bold script refers to Q.

<u>ἰσχυρότερός μου</u>	<u>εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς κύψας λυ-</u>	<u>τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων</u>	<u>εἰμὶ [ἐγὼ] ἄξιός ἵνα</u>
<u>ἔστιν, οὗ οὐκ</u>	<u>σαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν</u>	<u>αὐτοῦ.</u>	<u>λύσω αὐτοῦ τὸν</u>
<u>εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς τὰ</u>	<u>ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ.</u>		<u>ἱμάντα τοῦ</u>
<u>ὑποδήματα</u>			<u>ὑποδήματος.</u>
<u>βαστάσαι.</u>			

	<u>ἐγὼ ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς</u>	
	<u>ὕδατι,</u>	
<u>αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς</u>	<u>αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει</u>	<u>αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν</u>
<u>βαπτίσει ἐν</u>	<u>ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι</u>	<u>πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί.</u>
<u>πνεύματι ἁγίῳ</u>	<u>ἁγίῳ</u>	
<u>καὶ πυρί· οὗ</u>		<u>οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ</u>
<u>τὸ πτύον ἐν</u>		<u>αὐτοῦ διακαθαῖραι τὴν</u>
<u>τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ</u>		<u>ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναγ-</u>
<u>καὶ διακα-</u>		<u>γεῖν τὸν σῖτον εἰς τὴν</u>
<u>θαριεῖ τὴν</u>		<u>ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ</u>
<u>ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ</u>		<u>ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ</u>
<u>καὶ συνάξει</u>		<u>ἀσβέστω.</u>
<u>τὸν σῖτον αὐτοῦ</u>		
<u>εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην,</u>		
<u>τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον</u>		
<u>κατακαύσει πυρὶ</u>		
<u>ἀσβέστω.</u>		

Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἕτερα παρ-
ακαλῶν εὐηγγελίζετο τὸν λαόν.

The above synopsis reveals that, on the whole, the Marcan outline is shared by Matthew and Luke. Apart from some literary and stylistic differences noted below, the main noticeable difference is the addition of καὶ πυρί by both Matthew and Luke.

The following details of agreement between Matthew and Luke against Mark (perhaps reflecting their dependence on Q, while maintaining the Marcan outline) are discernible: (i) Both Matthew and Luke use the particle μέν to introduce the baptism of John. This is absent from Mark. (ii) Both use the present tense of βαπτίζω to describe John's baptism (Mark uses the aorist ἐβάπτισα). In this, both agree with the fourth Gospel. (iii) Perhaps for stylistic reasons, or by way of emphasis, both place the pronoun ὑμᾶς before the verb βαπτίσει (in Mark it follows the verb). (iv) In both, John's water baptism is first contrasted with that of a coming superior figure who is to accomplish a more efficacious baptism. Mark, on the other hand, refers first to the coming figure before contrasting his superior baptism with that of John. (v) Both have καὶ πυρί to further distinguish between the two baptisms, a phrase which is missing

from Mark. (vi) Both indicate the activity of the coming one using the imagery of the farmer and the granary. This imagery is not found in Mark.

The following agreements between Mark and Luke against Matthew may also be noted: (i) the coming figure is identified as ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου, while Matthew has ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος (agreeing with the fourth Gospel, which may be using an independent tradition), and describes him as ἰσχυρότερός μου; (ii) regarding the superiority of the coming one to John, both Mark and Luke have λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ, while Matthew has τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι (Mark alone has the word κύψας).

Matthew and Mark agree against Luke in only one point by the phrase ὁ ὀπίσω μου. This phrase was probably part of both Q and Mark. It was known to Luke, as shown below.

Another significant phrase is εἰς μετάνοιαν (Matt. 3.11a), which is probably used here by Matthew to keep in focus the theme of repentance which is the cornerstone of the messages of both John and Jesus (Matt 3.1-2, 7-10, 12). John, probably in direct reference to his exhortation to repentance and his denunciation of the crowds (Matthew includes the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Matt 3.1-2, 7-10; Lk 3.7-14), evokes the imagery of the farmer and his activity in the granary, and the subsequent burning of the chaff (Q: Lk 3.16b-17//Matt 3.11-12).

8.3 Description and Analysis of the Coming Figure

The comparison between the coming figure and John is found in all four Gospels, and in the best attested saying of John (Mk 1.7a; Matt 3.11a; Lk 3.16b; John 1.27a; 1.15b; 1.30a). These six versions probably derive from the three distinct traditions: Mark, Q and the Johannine tradition. This description of the coming figure was well embedded in the tradition and suggests its historicity.

Luke and Mark describe the figure as ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ('the one mightier than I is coming'; John 1.30 is closer in form to this); while Matthew has

ὁ...ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου ἔστιν ('the coming one is mightier than I'; Matt 3.11a; cf John 1.15, 27). On the whole, both express the same idea, with the first emphasising the action of coming, while the latter appears to underline the power associated with the ministry of the coming one. It is sometimes thought that we have two titles which John applied to the coming figure. It seems to us, however, that to occupy oneself with trying to establish whether John referred to this figure with the title 'the coming one' or 'the mightier one' is not only gratuitous but also misses the point of John's proclamation.⁴⁵⁷ I. H. Marshall has shown that while in second temple Judaism various figures are described as 'coming' and 'mighty', there is little actual evidence to suggest any titular use of the 'coming one' or 'mightier one' to identify any of these figures.⁴⁵⁸ In either version John is simply making a comparison between himself and the 'coming one' or 'mightier one'.⁴⁵⁹

The second noticeable variation is between the Baptist's description of the coming figure using the synoptic expression ἰσχυρότερός μου and the Johannine ἔμπροσθέν μου, provided that ἔμπροσθέν μου can be regarded as analogous to the synoptic ἰσχυρότερός μου. It seems, at a first glance, that there can be no correspondence between the two expressions, since ἰσχυρότερός μου is often viewed as a reference to the unique strength of the coming figure.⁴⁶⁰ However, a closer look at both expressions reveals that they help to interpret each other, and that they could be variant translations of the original. John 1.15b, 'Ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, is a Johannine interpretive representation of Mk 1.7 – though closer in form to Matt 3.11 – which expresses the early Church's

⁴⁵⁷ Scholarly opinion expressed on this include the suggestion that the Q version (referring to the Matthean version) comes probably closer to the original since it is unlikely that John used 'mightier one' as a messianic title, but the 'coming one' which was a current messianic title at the time of John. A counter argument to the above has been put forward by Davies and Allison. They posit that the Q version seems to turn the 'coming one' into a title. This means that it is the Markan version which is probably more authentic. For a discussion of these arguments see Scobie, *John the Baptist*, p. 65; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* ICC 2 vol (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988-91) 1.314; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, pp. 230-32.

⁴⁵⁸ I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), p. 146.

⁴⁵⁹ Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, pp. 52-55.

⁴⁶⁰ Webb and others take it as a reference to the physical strength of the coming figure. See Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, chapter 7.

understanding of the superiority of the messiah to John.⁴⁶¹ The same expression is repeated in John 1.30b. This expression (disregarding the Johannine note in 1.15c, 30c, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν, which serves to highlight the Evangelist's pre-existent Christology) does not refer to the physical strength of the coming one, but to the significance of his activity. Thus, the phrase ἔμπροσθέν μου does not make a different point from the synoptic ἰσχυρότερός μου. Both refer not to the physical strength, but rather to the power and significance of the coming figure's ministry. This contrast is further underlined by the servant-master analogy (Mk 1.7b and par).⁴⁶²

8.4 Ὀπίσω μου

The 'coming one' or 'the mightier one' is further qualified by the phrase ὀπίσω μου (after or behind me), which appears in all the Gospels except Luke (Mk 1.7; Matt 3.11; John 1.15, 27, 30). This multiple attestation suggests that it was embedded in the traditions concerning John's preaching, and that Luke possibly knew it, but omitted it as part of his redaction, to avoid any suggestion that Jesus was John's disciple.

This phrase has engendered a lively discussion among scholars. It has been proposed that ὀπίσω μου, which sometimes serves as a technical designation for discipleship (cf Mk 8.34), implies that the enigmatic figure preached about by John would emerge from among John's own disciples.⁴⁶³ This is not an impossibility in view of the above suggestion that Luke probably knew it, but omitted it because it might be understood to refer to Jesus as a disciple of John. Conzelmann attributes Luke's omission to the master-disciple sense of the phrase, and further observes that it posed an embarrassment for the early Church.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶¹ Cullmann, *The Early Church* ed. and trans. A. J. B. Higgins and S. Godman (London: SCM, 1956), pp. 177-82.

⁴⁶² For further discussion, see Davies & Allison, *Matthew* 1.315; D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956), pp. 266-67; b. *Ketuboth* 96a. See Strack & Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* 1:121; *Mekilta* on Exod 21.2.

⁴⁶³ K. Grobel, 'He That Cometh after Me', *JBL* 60 (1941), 397-401; Dodd, *Tradition*, pp. 273-74; Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 52.

⁴⁶⁴ H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke* trans G. Buswell (NY: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 24.

J. R. Michaels also notes this embarrassment of Jesus' original status as a disciple of John for the synoptic Evangelists, who, consequently, omitted any reference to the parallel ministries of both JB and Jesus as recorded in the fourth Gospel (John 3.22-24; 4.1-2), deliberately presenting the beginning of Jesus' public ministry after the incarceration of the Baptist (Lk 3.19-20; 4.14). Michaels, however, goes too far in his conclusion that John 'broke the conspiracy of silence' contrived by the synoptists, since ὀπίσω μου is used by all the Evangelists, except Luke.⁴⁶⁵ As shown below, evidence from the fourth Gospel seems to support the view that Jesus may have been, at some point, a disciple of John. However, it is helpful, as R. T. France has cautioned, not to perceive the term 'disciple' in 'a quasi-technical sense, with a resultant connotation of inferiority'.⁴⁶⁶

Others argue that ὀπίσω μου is meant to be understood as a temporal phrase, rather than as an expression for discipleship. For example, Fleddermann points out that Luke, on two occasions (Acts 13.25; 19.4), substitutes the preposition μετὰ for ὀπίσω to indicate that what he has in mind is a temporal succession rather than a spatial following that could be misunderstood to suggest discipleship.⁴⁶⁷ Nolland, on the other hand, suggests that its omission in Luke is to avoid any tension with the infancy narratives, where the presence of the saviour has already been emphasised.⁴⁶⁸

The above discussion throws into sharp relief the vigorous debate among scholars regarding possible interpretations of ὀπίσω μου. Some possibilities are more probable than others as a closer look at this phrase in the narrative framework of Mark's Gospel demonstrates. In Mk 16.7, the angelic young man instructed the women at the tomb to go and remind the disciples, who had failed in their discipleship (Mk 14.50-52, 54, 66-72 and par), of Jesus' earlier promise, ἀλλὰ μετὰ τὸ

⁴⁶⁵ J. R. Michaels, *Servant and Son: Jesus in Parable and Gospel* (Atlanta: J. Knox, 1981), pp. 19-22.

⁴⁶⁶ R. T. France, 'Jesus the Baptist?' in J. B. Green & M. Turner eds., *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 94-111.

⁴⁶⁷ H. Fleddermann, 'John and the Coming One (Matt 3.11-12// Lk 3.16-17)', in *Society for Biblical Literature 1984 Seminar Papers SBLSP 23* ed. K. H. Richards (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1984), pp. 377-84; Guelich, *Mark 1-8.26*, p. 52.

⁴⁶⁸ Nolland, *Luke 1-9.20*, p. 151.

ἐγερθῆναι με προάξω ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν (Mk 14.28; Matt 26.32).

Though the women failed to carry out this command, the import was to restore the disciples under their leader, the now risen Lord. Lincoln points out that προάγω recalls the earlier language used by the Evangelist to depict Jesus leading the way for his disciples to come 'behind' or 'follow after' (ὀπίσω) him.⁴⁶⁹ For example, in the call of the first disciples by the sea of Galilee, the fishermen abandoned their trade to follow Jesus when he commanded them, Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, (Mk 1.17-18; Matt 4.19-20). Similarly, in the context of the first passion prediction Jesus explained to the twelve and the crowd that true discipleship involved following him (ὀπίσω μου) along the way of the cross (Mk 8.34; cf. Matt 16.23).

The literary and the historical evaluation of this phrase in Mark suggests that the dominant sense is that of master-disciple.⁴⁷⁰ However this may be, suffice it to say here that, while none of the Evangelists uses this phrase directly of Jesus in relation to John, they, nonetheless, agree that Jesus was among those who came to hear John's preaching and accepted his baptism.

8.5 The Activities of the Coming Figure

With regard to the mode of baptism, John contrasts his water baptism with the superior baptism ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (Mk 1.8) and ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί (Q=Matt 3.11b//Lk 3.16c). This variation has spawned a variety of interpretations which attempt to establish the original description of the baptism of John's enigmatic figure. The main options canvassed include baptism (i) with fire only; (ii) with wind (πνεύματι) and fire; (iii) with a Holy Spirit only; and (iv) with a Holy Spirit and fire.

8.5.1 Baptism with Fire

The first option has to its advantage the familiar OT reference to fire as a symbol of judgment (e.g. Isa 31.9; 66.24; Amos 7.4; Nah 1.6; Hab 3.12; Mal 3.2) and since

⁴⁶⁹ A. T. Lincoln, 'The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8' in *Interpretation of Mark*, pp. 229-51.

⁴⁷⁰ See §9.3 for further discussion.

John's preaching contained a message of judgment (Matt 3.12//Lk 3.17), it is possible that the activity of John's coming and mighty figure was to carry out a judgment described as a 'baptism of fire'.⁴⁷¹ It is argued that Mark's version (cf. John 1.33) appears to be reminiscent of the early Church's interpretation of the Pentecost experience to which the original message of John has been adapted. This means that the Matthean and Lucan versions are a conflated reading of Mark and Q, with Mark omitting an earlier reference to fire.⁴⁷² The problem with this view that it is a purely hypothetical reconstruction for which there is little circumstantial evidence.⁴⁷³

8.5.2 *Baptism with Wind and Fire*

Like the first, the second option also has the support of the OT where both πνεῦμα (taken as 'wind', פּוֹחַ) and fire are symbols of judgment (Isa 29.6; 30.27-28; 40.24; Jer 23.19; 30.23; Ezek 13.11-13).⁴⁷⁴ Moreover, it also does not involve reconstructing a hypothetical text. It creates a parallelism with the analogy of the activity of the farmer on the threshing floor (Matt 3.12//Lk 3.17), in which both wind and fire are prominent. However, the problem with this explanation is that πνεῦμα is described as ἅγιον not only in Mark, but also in Matthew and Luke. This qualification of the Spirit by the adjective 'Holy' has been seen as an interpolation by early Christians who saw themselves as the recipients of God's eschatological 'Holy' Spirit (Eph 1.13). However, the term 'Holy' may be understood within the milieu of second temple Judaism as a reference to the function of the Spirit – which includes both holiness and regeneration – in accordance with the OT, rather than as a title in the form

⁴⁷¹ For fire as a purifying and punitive agent see Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism*, p. 44.

⁴⁷² T. W. Manson, 'Baptism in the Church', *SJT* 2 (1949), 391-403; —'John the Baptist', *BJRL* 36 (1953-54), 395-412; V. Taylor, *St Mark*, p. 157; See also A. G. Patzia, 'Did John the Baptist Preach a Baptism of Fire and the Holy Spirit?' *EvQ* 40 (1968), 21-27.

⁴⁷³ J. D. G. Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', *NovT* 14 (1972), 81-92. He gives a summary of the above alternatives and their supporters.

⁴⁷⁴ Here πνεῦμα is understood not in Christian terms, but as a strong wind of judgment, since 'wind', 'breath', and 'spirit' are all possible translations for πνεῦμα/ פּוֹחַ. See H. Kleinknecht *et al*, 'πνεῦμα, κτλ.' *TDNT* 6.332-455; R. Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist According to Flavius Josephus' Recently Discovered 'Capture of Jerusalem' and Other Jewish and Christian Sources* trans A. H. Krappe (London: Methuen, 1931), pp. 275-80; E. Best, 'Spirit-Baptism', *NovT* 4 (1960), 236-43.

of the 'Holy Spirit'.⁴⁷⁵ It has also been demonstrated that in the imagery of the farmer and the threshing floor, the farmer is not winnowing the grain in the wind. In fact the process of winnowing has already been carried out. This means that wind is out of the question in this context.⁴⁷⁶

8.5.3 *Baptism with a Holy Spirit*

Proponents of the third option have in their favour the straightforward unembellished account of Mark. It is argued that John spoke of a Spirit baptism, but in the purgative and destructive sense. The saying subsequently assumed a new meaning within the early Church after Pentecost, when the 'Spirit' became the 'Holy Spirit' and baptism with the Holy Spirit was understood as endowment with the spiritual gift.⁴⁷⁷ Similarly, Ellis suggests that since fire is absent from Mark, it could be a 'Christian *pesh*-ing to the Pentecostal fulfilment'.⁴⁷⁸ However, in the Q tradition John's preaching included a fiery judgment motif (Matt 3.7-12/Lk 3.7-9, 17).

8.5.4 *Baptism with a Holy Spirit and Fire*

According to Mark and Q, JB's description of the coming figure included an earlier reference to a Holy Spirit and fire. Furthermore, it could be argued that the readiness with which the disciples of John encountered by Paul at Ephesus (who would not accept any teaching, but that of their master) responded to the teaching concerning the Holy Spirit baptism may suggest that they were convinced that it was part of their master's message (Acts 19.1-7).⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁵ C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1947), p. 126. Those who support the authenticity of the term 'holy' as part of John's preaching, include Scobie, *John the Baptist*, pp. 70-71; Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', *NovT* 14 (1972), pp. 81-92; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, pp. 473-74; Nolland, *Lk 1-9.20*, pp. 147, 153.

⁴⁷⁶ See §8.5.5 below.

⁴⁷⁷ Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, p. 62. For Bultmann the reference to the spirit here is seen as a Christian interpolation. — *Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 246-47. Against this view, see Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', *NovT* 14 (1972), 81-92; Brownlee, 'John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls', in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 33-53.

⁴⁷⁸ E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* rev. edn. NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 90.

⁴⁷⁹ According to Backhaus, these disciples were actually old Christians who had become followers of Jesus from the Baptist community. — *Jüngerkreis*, p. 369. See also Guelich, *Mark 1.8.26*, p. 27; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* trans B. Nobel and G. Shinn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p. 553; E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* trans W. J. Montague SBT 41 (London: SCM, 1964), pp. 136-48.

It is better to see in both Holy Spirit and fire the means of eschatological purgation experienced by the penitent and the impenitent. The direct object, ὑμεῖς (you) is the apparent recipient of both baptisms (αὐτὸς ὑμεῖς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί, Q=Matt 3.11// Lk 3.16). The pronoun, ὑμεῖς, could refer to John's audience generally, including those who have accepted John's baptism, as well as those who have not as yet made up their mind, or have rejected it altogether. In the synoptic Gospels, John preaches to the masses in the Judean desert (Matt 3.1), variously described as the ὄχλοις (Lk 3.7), τοῦ λαοῦ (3.15) and ὑμεῖς (Mk 1.8 and par). In view of the continuity between John and the coming figure, the second ὑμεῖς of the baptism of the coming figure may refer to the same context and audience.

The parallel evidence of the purifying activity of the Holy Spirit and water has been noted in the DSS.⁴⁸⁰ We show below the continuity between John's water baptism, the Spirit baptism of the coming figure, and the water and Spirit baptism of the early Church.⁴⁸¹ It may suffice to state here that John's proclamation and repentance-baptism, while bringing home to some of his audience the crisis of the impending judgment, are not fundamentally removed from that of the coming figure. Thus, while not diminishing the contrast between the two baptisms, one should be cautious not to take it as a contrast of opposition. In light of the above discussion, it may be concluded that the use of similar language by John and the early Church concerning the Holy Spirit baptism does not necessarily indicate a Christian gloss.

8.5.5 *The Imagery of the Threshing Floor*

The general picture given in Q (Matt 3.12//Lk 3.17) is that of a Palestinian farmer who, after cutting and gathering the grain, goes through the process of threshing, winnowing and storage.⁴⁸² However, here the processes up to the winnowing which make it possible for the grain and the chaff to be gathered up separately have already been completed. On the threshing floor now only the wheat and the chaff remain, to

⁴⁸⁰ §4.3.5.

⁴⁸¹ §9.7.

⁴⁸² Even though this pericope is attested only by Q (Matt 3.12// Lk 3.17), its authenticity, as far as we are aware, has not been disputed.

which the farmer comes with the winnowing shovel in his hand, poised to clean the threshing floor by shovelling up the wheat into the granary. This conclusion has been reached by a number of scholars, including Schürmann, Nolland and Webb.⁴⁸³

Webb has persuasively discussed the inadequacy of the common interpretation of the expression, οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ διακαθαῖραι τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ (Lk 3.17a//Matt 3.11a), to portray the process of winnowing – which involves the tossing of the harvested grain into the air for the wind to separate the grain from the chaff. Drawing on an earlier work of Dalman, he makes a distinction between מִן־הַ, θρίνאַξ (a winnowing fork) and פֿלֶגֶל, πτύον (a winnowing shovel).⁴⁸⁴ While the actual winnowing of the grain is accomplished by the former, the latter is used to heap up the grain prior to winnowing, and to gather the wheat and the chaff after the winnowing has been done by the winnowing fork. Furthermore, the verb διακαθαίρω suggests a cleaning or pruning action, but not the winnowing. This interpretation is borne out by John's description which suggests that it is the ἄλων (the threshing-floor), and not the grain which is the object of the cleansing. Moreover, the next two statements confirm that the action is on the threshing floor with respect to the wheat and the chaff: καὶ συναγαγεῖν τὸν σῖτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ (Lk 3.17b-c//Matt 3.12b-c).

If the above analysis is correct then it confirms the significant relationship between the baptising ministry of John and the coming figure. Webb observes:

If the wheat and chaff have already been separated prior to the arrival of the expected figure at the threshing floor, this suggests that it is John's own ministry which has effectively separated the wheat from the chaff, the righteous from the unrighteous. It is the people's response to his proclamation which distinguishes them. If they repent and are baptized, then they are the wheat, but if they refuse, then they are the chaff. ..it is John's ministry which creates the division between these two groups. It is the response to John's ministry which has 'piled up the grain on the threshing floor'. This imagery also points to the fact that one effect of John's ministry is the creation of a sectarian movement.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium* HTKNT 3.1-2, 2 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1969) 1:177-78; Nolland, *Luke 1-9.20*, p. 153; Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 295-300.

⁴⁸⁴ G. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* 7 vols, 1928-42 repr. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964) 3:116-24, 201, 253-54. See Isa 30.24; Jer 15.7.

⁴⁸⁵ Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, p. 298.

8.5.6 Summary

In conclusion, of the options considered, the most plausible one is the view that sees both 'Holy Spirit' and 'fire' as constitutive elements of John's proclamation. Taken together with the imagery of the farmer and the granary (Q=Matt 3.12//Lk 3.17), which is regarded as an authentic saying of John, the following may be noted as historically reliable elements of John's proclamation of the enigmatic eschatological figure: (i) his coming is imminent; (ii) he is going to exercise a powerful and significant ministry; (iii) in comparison to John's water baptism, the coming superior figure will baptise with 'a Holy Spirit and fire'; (iv) according to Q (Matt 3.12//Lk 3.17), his ministry will involve both judgment and restoration.⁴⁸⁶

This presupposes a continuity between the activity of JB and the coming figure. This transcendent figure's baptism 'with a Holy Spirit and fire', is best understood as referring to two different activities in connection with the responses that have been made to JB's message and water baptism. Those who have responded favourably to John's message and undergone his water baptism will now experience the coming figure's baptism with 'a Holy Spirit', which metaphorically describes the gracious bestowal of a Holy Spirit on the penitent. This eschatological blessing of a Holy Spirit is probably a reference to the Spirit's work in enabling the penitent to live righteously and in obedience before God. While the penitent experience the joy of salvation as they are gathered into the granary, the godless and the impenitent, represented by those who have spurned John's message and baptism, will be judged and destroyed in the baptism of fire (cf Ezek 36). The finality and irreversibility of this annihilation is expressed in Q=Matt 3.12c//Lk 3.17c: τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστω.

8.6 The Identity of the Coming Figure

From the above discussion, the question that naturally arises is, what is the identity of the figure proclaimed by John? The description of the coming figure,

⁴⁸⁶ Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, pp. 146-48; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, pp. 473-74; Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 277-78;

especially according to Q=Matt 3.11-12//Lk 3.16b-17, points to an apocalyptic avenger, and it is only after reading Jesus' reply to the question from the imprisoned John that one gets the impression that Jesus is the coming one (Q=Matt 11.2-11//Lk 7.19-28). Mark 1.7-8 offers no parallel to this apocalyptic figure in Q, and one is implicitly guided to read John's message as a reference to Jesus as the coming figure. Thus the identification of Jesus as the coming figure is gradually accomplished by the order and presentation of the synoptic accounts (e.g. Jesus comes after John, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the baptism of Jesus by John). The identification is made by the Evangelists because of the early Church's belief that Jesus fulfils the description of John's announced figure. Thus in Paul's sermon in Acts 13.23-25, Luke can take it for granted that John was referring to Jesus. In fact, the fourth Evangelist is more explicit in identifying the coming figure with Jesus (John 1.30a, 33).

It appears, however, that John preached about this coming figure without any explicit reference to his identity. Scholars have suggested a number of identifications including Yahweh, one of John's own disciples, the messiah, the Son of Man, Michael/Melchizedek, and the eschatological prophet. A full discussion of all these figures is not particularly relevant here.⁴⁸⁷ What is noteworthy here is that John's figure is portrayed in terms reminiscent of the coming of Yahweh himself to judge and restore his people. This is in line with the OT idea of God as mighty to save and judge. This idea of judgment and restoration clearly lies behind the composite citation of Exod 23.20; Mal 3.1; Isa 40.3 in Mk 1.2-3. It is also implied in the activity of the coming figure who baptises with a Spirit designated as 'Holy'.

Nevertheless, some elements in John's proclamation suggest that a figure other than Yahweh himself is intended. For example, the comparative, ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου, and the mundane reference to untying (or carrying) his shoes would have been

⁴⁸⁷ For a detailed discussion of these figures, see Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 219-60, 282-88; 8; Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire Baptism', *NovT* 14 (1972), 81-92; J. H. Hughes, 'John the Baptist! The Forerunner of God Himself', *NovT* 14 (1972), 191-21; H. Thyen, 'ΒΑΠΤΙΣΜΑ ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑΣ ΕΙΣ ΑΦΕΣΙΝ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΩΝ', in *The Future of our Religious Past: Essays in Honour of R. Bultmann* ed. J. M. Robinson, trans. C. E. Carston & R. P. Scharlemann (London: SCM, 1971), pp. 131-68; P. G. Bretscher, 'Whose Sandals? (Matt 3.11)', *JBL* 86 (1967), 81-86; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* CGTC (Cambridge: CUP, 1963), p. 48; J. A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies* SBT 34 (London: SCM, 1962), pp. 30-31.

perceived as presumptuous and an unparalleled anthropomorphism if Yahweh were being referred to.⁴⁸⁸ Thus, while John described his figure in terms of the coming of Yahweh, he probably meant an agent who would act in the power and authority of Yahweh as judge and restorer. In both the OT and the literature of the second temple period, Yahweh is the prime mover behind all the judgment and restoration figures.

The DSS may offer us some clues as to the kind of figure that John envisaged. In our discussion of Essene messianic thought, it was noted how the Qumran sectaries, in their commentaries on Isaiah (4QpIsa^a[4Q161]; cf. 4Q285), applied the Isaianic prophecy (Isa 10.23-11.4) to their eschatological war against the Kittim, fought and won under the command of the Davidic messiah.⁴⁸⁹ In their messianic interpretation of the Isaianic passage, the sectaries understood Isa 10.33-34 as a description of the final confrontation in which the Kittim are put to rout. In 4Q161, fragments 8-10, lines 2, 6-8, the Kittim are to be crushed with an axe by the powerful one, which is interpreted as God's great one, his messiah:

2...[and the tallest tre]es [shall be cut down and] the lofty [shall be felled] with the axe, and Lebanon through a powerful one (בְּאִדִּיר)...(x, 33-34)
 6. The heart of the forest shall be felled with the axe, th[ey]...
 7. for the war of the Kittim. And Lebanon through a p[owerful one
 8. shall fall (x, 34). Its interpretation concerns the] Kittim who will be given into the hand of his great one (גְּדֹלֹל)...⁴⁹⁰

בְּאִדִּיר, which in the Hebrew Bible frequently refers to the powerful in society, such as nobles or princes, is here interpreted by גְּדֹלֹל, which carries the same sense, while the suffix (גְּדֹלֹלִי) makes it more likely that God's agent is the referent.⁴⁹¹

Within the context of John's proclamation of the coming figure, and his moral and ethical exhortation to the crowd, there is an allusion to Isaiah 10.34 (cf. Lk 3.9//Matt 3.10).⁴⁹² The image of trees hewn down by an axe, which carries the idea of

⁴⁸⁸ S. Brown, "'Water-Baptism' and 'Spirit-Baptism' in Luke-Acts", *ATR* 59 (1977), 135-51.

⁴⁸⁹ §5.5.1

⁴⁹⁰ J. M. Allegro with the collaboration of A. A. Anderson eds. trans, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan V: Qumran Cave 4:1 (4Q158-4Q186)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), pp. 13-14; Vermes, *DSSE*, pp. 267-68.

⁴⁹¹ Vermes, 'The Oxford Forum for Qumran Research on the Rule of War from Cave 4 (4Q285)', *JJS* 43 (1991), 88-90.

⁴⁹² I am here indebted to Professor Richard Bauckham of St Andrews University, my *alma mater*, for a short paper, 'The Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah 10.34 in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2 Baruch and the

judgment, recurs in the Hebrew Bible in Isa 10.34; Jer 46.22-23; Ezek 31.12; Dan 4.10, but notice that the explicit mention of the word 'axe' or 'axes' occurs only in Isa 10.34 and Jer 46.22 respectively. Isa 10.34 reads:

He will cut down the forest thickets with an axe; Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One.⁴⁹³

According to R. Bauckham, Isa 10.34, offers the most likely background to Q (Lk 3.9//Matt 3.10). It is more easily susceptible to John's interpretation, as a reference not to the Gentile kings, armies or nations, but to the judgment of the proud who remain unrepentant in spite of John's message of warning. In this connection, the tall trees of Isa 10.33 can symbolise those who pride themselves in their physical descent from Abraham (Q=Lk 3.8//Matt 3.9) and, consequently, refuse to repent.⁴⁹⁴

However, identifying an allusion to Isa 10.34 still does not settle the issue of the identity of John's proclaimed figure. In fact, Q (Matt 3.10//Lk 3.9) does not tell us whether John adopted a messianic interpretation of Isa 10.34, though the reference to the axe, taken in conjunction with another saying of John, 'His winnowing shovel is in his hand' (Q=Matt 3.12//Lk 3.17), may point to an imminent eschatological judgment by the coming figure. It is possible that John adopted the image of Isa 10.34 with reference to the coming eschatological judgment, because of the messianic understanding of Isa 11.1-5 which, according to the exegetical tradition, read 10.33-11.5 as a unit, and most probably in line with the Qumran interpretation above.

Apart from the above allusions from the DSS, which throw some light on the possible messianic significance of John's announced figure, the identity of this imminent eschatological figure is still shrouded in mystery. Did John know who he was, but for some reason decided to be reticent about it? Are there any clues in the Gospel tradition regarding the identity of this figure?

Preaching of John the Baptist', read out to the Apocryphal, Pseudepigrapha and Dead Sea Scrolls group of the British NT Conference, St Andrews, Scotland, 1993.

⁴⁹³ NIV.

⁴⁹⁴ Bauckham, 'Messianic Interpretation of Isa 10.34', 6. Prof. Bauckham has also noted a passage in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Bar 36-40) which, while not explicitly an interpretation of Isa 10.34, implicitly has some correspondence with 4Q285. A similar observation was been made by W. Horbury at the Oxford Forum Seminar. See Vermes, 'Oxford Forum', 89-90.

8.6.1 *John's Uncertainty about Jesus' Identity*

While the above discussion indicates that it is impossible to make any conclusive observations regarding the identity of this figure, the fourth Evangelist makes it explicit that JB saw Jesus as the coming figure (John 1.26-27, 29-34).⁴⁹⁵ Similarly, the Matthean dialogue between John and Jesus at the baptismal scene, ὁ δὲ Ἰωάννης διεκώλυεν αὐτὸν λέγων, Ἐγὼ χρεῖαν ἔχω ὑπὸ σοῦ βαπτισθῆναι, καὶ σὺ ἔρχῃ πρὸς με; ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν, Ἄφες ἄρτι, οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην. τότε ἀφίησιν αὐτόν (Matt 3.14-15) – a passage pregnant with the idea of fulfilment of OT prophecies – suggests that John had been impressed by Jesus, or had a perception of Jesus prior to the baptism.⁴⁹⁶ The difficulty with these two passages is that they are often seen as Christian apologetics, rather than historical.⁴⁹⁷

A much less controversial passage is Q=Matt 11.2-6/Lk 7.18-23. This episode centres around the question which the imprisoned John sent to Jesus through his disciples: Σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν; (Lk 7.19//Matt 11.3). This pericope falls within a series of linked units in both Matthew and Luke, which describe the relationship between the ministries of Jesus and John (Matt 11.2-6, 7-11, 16-19; Lk 7.18-23, 24-28, 31-35). The Matthean sequence is interrupted between the second and the third units by verses 12-15, of which verses 12-13 have a Lucan parallel in Lk 16.16.

Some scholars have questioned the historicity of the underlying tradition of the episode in Matt 11.2-6/Lk 7.18-23. For example, Strauss, taking his cue from the account of Josephus (*Ant* 18.116-19), argues that it is inconceivable that John would

⁴⁹⁵ See §8.2 for text. Beasley-Murray, *John*, pp. 18-24.

⁴⁹⁶ For further discussion see D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* WBC 33A (Waco: Word Books, 1993), pp. 53-60; F. W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew. A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), p. 99; J. P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A Redactional Study of Mt. 5.17-48* *Analecta Biblica* 71 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), pp. 73-82; E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* trans. D. E. Green (London: SPCK, 1976), pp. 52-56; A. Blakiston, *John the Baptist and His Relation to Jesus: With Some Account of His Following* (London: J. & J. Bennett, 1912), esp. pp. 184-97. See also Appendix.

⁴⁹⁷ Some understand Matt 3.14-15 in purely theological terms. But even this redactional *theologoumenon* is understood to underline the embarrassment that the baptism of Jesus by John had become for the early Church. See J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* vol 1 ABRL (London: Doubleday, 1991), note 41, p. 237.

be allowed the freedom in prison to send or receive messengers.⁴⁹⁸ Others, in the tradition of form criticism, see the episode as a pronouncement story attributed to Jesus. According to Bultmann, it is a product of the early Christian community; he classifies it among his apophthegms, specifically as one of those passages in which John is made to testify to Jesus as the messiah. Bultmann, however, regards the saying in Matt 11.5-6 as authentic.⁴⁹⁹ Yet others locate its origin in the later controversy between the disciples of John and the early Christians as to whether John or Jesus was the Christ.⁵⁰⁰

According to Sanders, while Matt 11.5-6 possibly suggests that Jesus saw his own healing and preaching ministry, especially his exorcisms (Matt 12.27-28), as connected to the kingdom of God, it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove what Jesus precisely thought about these activities:

It is conceivable—weaker than possible—that the wording of Matt 12.28//Luke 11.20 and Matt 11.5f. gives us his own precise interpretation of his work. Moreover, if Jesus envisaged the kingdom as 'breaking in' through his words and actions, we could not say that such a view was distinctively characteristic of him, since we do not know everything that John the Baptist thought about his own mission, and nothing about what other prophets before the first revolt thought of theirs. The fact that Theudas and the Egyptian thought that they could produce mighty signs (the parting of the river and the collapse of the walls of Jerusalem), however, indicates that they attributed considerable importance to their own roles in the divine scheme.⁵⁰¹

If this is true, is Jesus' reply to John, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see' (Matt 11.4; in Luke 7.21 Jesus conducts more healings and exorcisms in the presence of the emissaries)⁵⁰² then meant to allay John's fears that, indeed, he was the messiah? According to Sanders, this proposition, which seems attractive, is difficult to prove. In fact, he is sceptical of the authenticity of Matt 11.2-6//Lk 7.18-23.

However, the above scepticism is unwarranted: (i) this episode is found in the best attested stratum of the dominical sayings of Jesus (Q); and (ii) it is unlikely that the

⁴⁹⁸ D. F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* trans G. Eliot ed. P. C. Hodgson, SCM Press Lives of Jesus (London: SCM, 1973), p. 229.

⁴⁹⁹ Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 23-24, 162.

⁵⁰⁰ Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, pp. 130-31; Wink, 'Jesus' Reply to John: Matt 11.2-6//Lk 7.18-23', *Forum* 5 (1989), 121-28. Against this option, see P. Hoffmann, *Studien zur Theologie der Logienquelle* NTAbh 8 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), pp. 198-233, esp. 214.

⁵⁰¹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 129-41, esp. 140.

⁵⁰² Jesus' words in Matt 11.4-5//Lk 7.22 echo Isa 29.18; 35.5-6; 61.1.

early Church would have invented this episode which includes Jesus' panegyric of John (Q=Lk 7.24-28; 16.16//Matt 11.7-13).⁵⁰³ A number of scholars rightly accept the historicity of Matt 11.2-6//Lk 7.18-23. For example, Kümmel argues that 'the Baptist appears here in no way as a witness to Christ, but as an uncertain questioner, which contradicts the tendency of the early Church to make him such a witness'.⁵⁰⁴

Two possible interpretations of John's inquiry emerge: either (i) John had never thought of Jesus as 'he who is to come' until he hears in prison the miraculous deeds of Jesus and therefore sought further proof from Jesus;⁵⁰⁵ or (ii) John had thought of Jesus as the coming one, but there in prison he appears as a disillusioned sceptic who expresses real doubt and hesitation about the identity of Jesus. Of these two possibilities the second is more likely, since: (i) John's question presupposes that he had speculated about Jesus; (ii) Jesus, after being baptised by John, remained a follower of John for a period of time (a tradition attested by Mk, Q and John),⁵⁰⁶ and conducted a concurrent and co-ordinated baptising ministry with John (John 3.22-24; 4.1-3),⁵⁰⁷ making it likely that he would have an idea about Jesus; and (iii) Jesus' ministry, besides its urgent eschatological tone, like that of John, was characterised by power (e.g. Mk 1.14-15 and par; Matt 12.28//Lk 11.20).⁵⁰⁸ It is therefore possible that John recognised Jesus as the coming one and that the fourth Gospel and Matthew may be right to suggest this.

In conclusion, first, it is probable that John proclaimed an imminent superior figure. Secondly, if the Qumran messianic interpretation lies behind John's thought, then it is possible that John envisaged a messianic figure (conceivably Jesus). Thirdly,

⁵⁰³ §9.5.

⁵⁰⁴ Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus* trans D. M. Barton SBT 23 (London: SCM, 1957), pp. 110-11; Nolland, *Luke 1-9.20*, pp. 326-27; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, pp. 662-65; Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, p. 292; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), pp. 55-60.

⁵⁰⁵ Nolland suggests that John's question is 'a tentative exploration of the possibility that the one whom he had heralded as eschatological judge and deliverer may be present in Jesus in a quite unexpected form'. *Luke 1-9.20*, pp. 325-33, esp. 329.

⁵⁰⁶ §8.4.

⁵⁰⁷ §§9.3-9.4.

⁵⁰⁸ N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), pp. 58-61, 171, 199; Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983), p. 155.

the episode involving John's question to Jesus is historical and presupposes that John had Jesus in mind as the coming figure. John's witness to Jesus, therefore, cannot be dismissed as a fabrication by the early Church (John 1.26-27, 29-34; Matt 3.14-15).⁵⁰⁹

8.7 Conclusion

Our evaluation of the evidence indicates that JB undoubtedly announced the imminent arrival of a superior figure, who is described in categories that make it likely that John was referring to a human agent of God. This enigmatic figure is portrayed in relation to JB as one of his disciples.

The activities of the anticipated figure included a baptism with 'a Holy Spirit and fire', in contrast with John's water baptism. The reference to 'a Holy Spirit and fire' suggests, as in both the OT and DSS, that the ministry of the coming figure would involve both judgment and restoration. These activities are further supported by reference to the imagery of the farmer and the threshing floor (Q=Matt 3.12//Lk 3.17). Here, there is a connection between John and the coming figure. The enigmatic figure's baptism with 'a Holy Spirit and fire' refers to two different aspects of his ministry, which are all related to the responses that have been made to John's message and water baptism. Those who have responded positively to John's ministry are endowed with the eschatological blessing of 'a Holy Spirit'. These are the 'wheat' that are sifted from the 'chaff' and gathered into the 'granary', while the 'chaff' – those who have spurned John's ministry – are destroyed in the baptism by fire.

With regard to the identity of the coming figure, our evidence is not conclusive. However, it is certain that John had an opinion about this figure (Q=Matt 11.2-3//7.18-19; cf Lk 3.20). It is possible that JB had Jesus in mind and that this was not simply an idea read back into the narrative by the early Christians.

⁵⁰⁹ See §9.2.

9. JOHN AND JESUS: THE TWO BAPTISTS?

9.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter we established that Jesus stood much more in JB's succession (even if the NT has overstressed the evidence) than is often recognised. Whereas a lot of scholarship is prone to break this continuity, our discussion has shown that there is a small but reasonable amount of evidence that John identified Jesus as the coming one who would continue and accomplish, in a more powerful way, his ministry to God's covenant people.

In this chapter we shall look further at the continuity between the two figures from Jesus' side of the equation. Our primary focus will be on the baptism of Jesus by John, and its implications for the ministry of Jesus and the early Church. Other important issues to be examined include: (i) the kind of relationship that was forged between Jesus and John after the baptismal event, and the perceptions of Jesus' contemporaries in their attempts to categorise his ministry; (ii) the supposition that Jesus continued in the line of John as a second Baptist; (iii) the possibility that Jesus and his disciples continued to baptise in Galilee; and (iv) the question of continuity and discontinuity between the baptisms of John, Jesus and the post-Easter Church. This chapter will also highlight some of the differences between JB and Jesus.

9.2 The Baptism of Jesus

In an attempt to find the right starting point for an account of the proclamation of Jesus, Jeremias observes that while John's ministry was the context within which Jesus' proclamation must be located, the real starting point is in 'the call which Jesus experienced when he was baptised by John'.⁵¹⁰ Similarly, Ernst observes:

⁵¹⁰ Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* Part 1 trans J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1971), pp. 43-56. A number of suggestions have been made regarding the meaning of Jesus' baptism in relation to his ministry. Suffice it to note here that some see him as the atoning servant who offers the atoning sacrifice in his baptism with sinners and thereby shows solidarity with them in

Der entscheidende, historisch greifbare Berührungspunkt zwischen Jesus und Johannes war die Jordantaufe (Mk 1.9). Kein christlicher Theologe wäre von sich aus auf den Gedanken gekommen, den Sohn Gottes mit Umkehr und Sündenvergebung in Verbindung zu bringen. Die biblische Überlieferung der Taufferzählung gibt in ihrer zunehmenden apologetischen Überarbeitung noch deutlich zu erkennen, wie schwer man sich mit der offenkundigen Subordination getan hat. An der Tatsächlichkeit der Taufe Jesu durch Johannes besteht also kein begründeter Zweifel. Möglicherweise kann man noch ein Stück weitergehen und sagen, Jesus habe bei dieser Gelegenheit sein großes Berufungserlebnis gehabt.⁵¹¹

That Jesus underwent baptism is attested by all the four Evangelists (Mk 1.9-11; Matt 3.13-17; Lk 3.21-22; John 1.31-34).

Historically, the baptism of Jesus by John became a problem for the early Church. It raised questions about the belief in Jesus' sinlessness, or his superiority to John.⁵¹² If John's baptism was one 'of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Mk 1.4; Lk 3.3), did Jesus have to submit to it in order to receive absolution?⁵¹³ This problem is underlined by the apologetics in the extra-canonical Gospels. For example, the *Gospel of the Ebionites* gives an extended account of the baptism of Jesus by John, incorporating a dialogue similar to that noted in Matt 3.14:

John fell down before him and said: I beseech thee, Lord, baptise thou me. But he prevented him and said: 'Suffer it; for thus it is fitting that everything should be fulfilled.'⁵¹⁴

Similarly, the *Gospel of the Nazareans 2* records:

Behold, the mother of the Lord and his brethren said to him: John the Baptist baptises unto the remission of sins, let us go and be baptised by him. But he said

their need; others interpret it as the birth of his messianic consciousness, or the clarification and confirmation of his personal ministry; still, others suggest it was the moment when he was revealed to Israel or to John the Baptist; while others maintain that it signified the beginning of Jesus' ministry. See O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* rev. edn. trans. S. C. Guthrie and C. A. M. Hall (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 63-67; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, pp. 55-67; R. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus* SBT 12 (London: SCM, 1954), pp. 36-89; V. Taylor, *St Mark*, p. 162; The historicity of the baptism of Jesus by John is, on the whole, accepted by most scholars. See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 11; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, p. 234.

⁵¹¹ Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, p. 337.

⁵¹² Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, pp. 45-67; Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: SCM, 1950), pp. 15-19.

⁵¹³ For further discussion of the epiphany of the spirit's descent and the voice from heaven, see D. Hill, 'Son and Servant: An Essay on Matthean Christology', *JSNT* 6 (1980), 2-16; L. E. Keck, 'The Spirit and Dove', *NTS* 17 (1970), 41-67; I. H. Marshall, 'Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A Reconsideration of Mk 1.11', *NTS* 15 (1969), 326-36; Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 64; C. H. Turner, ὁ υἱός μου ἀγαπητός, *JTS* 27 (1926), 113-29; G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus Considered in the light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* trans D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), pp. 276-80.

⁵¹⁴ The Ebionites were heretical Jewish Christians, found around the eastern part of the Jordan. See *The Gospel of the Ebionites* 2-3 *NTA* 1.166-71, esp. 169; Cameron ed., *Other Gospels*, p. 105.

to them: Wherein have I sinned that I should go and be baptised by him? Unless what I have said is ignorance (a sin of ignorance).⁵¹⁵

It is inconceivable that the early Church would have gone out of its way to create material which would afterwards cause it such embarrassment. Jesus' baptism by John is clearly embedded in the Gospel tradition

While the above conclusion is supported by most scholars, a minority view has been expressed that not only was Jesus not baptised by John, but that there was no interaction whatsoever between them. A representative of this position is Morton Enslin, who adduces the following arguments in support of his claim that Jesus was not baptised by John: (i) in the Gospel accounts there is a conscious attempt by the Evangelist to reduce John from his status as an independent prophet into a herald of Jesus; (ii) not only does Josephus' account of John's execution stand in marked contrast to the report of the same event in the Gospels, but it lacks any reference to the expected figure proclaimed by John; and (iii) John's disciples continued as an identifiable movement after John had witnessed to Jesus as the coming one.⁵¹⁶

Against Enslin, it is obvious from our discussion so far that (i) while there is a subtle attempt by the Evangelists to minimise John's independent status and highlight his role as a witness to Jesus, there is yet stronger evidence for Jesus' submission to John's 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins', an event which posed an embarrassment to the early Church. We have pointed out how unthinkable it is for the early Christians to create a story which would later be used against them.

(ii) In our evaluation of Josephus' account of Antipas' execution of John, we concluded that while his perception of the event is different from that of the Gospel accounts, they do not necessarily contradict each other. In fact, the two accounts are complementary. Both agree that John's incarceration and subsequent execution were ordered by Herod Antipas. The Gospel writers, however, understood this event from a religious perspective, while Josephus understood it from a socio-political point of

⁵¹⁵ This Gospel appears to be an Aramaic or Syriac translation of the Gospel of Matthew. *Gospel of the Nazareans* 2 NTA 1.154-65, esp. 160; Cameron, ed. *Other Gospels*, p. 99.

⁵¹⁶ Morton S. Enslin, 'John and Jesus', *ZNW* 66 (1975), 1-18.

view.⁵¹⁷ It is an anachronism to make a sharp distinction between the religious and the socio-political aspects of life in second temple Judaism.⁵¹⁸ With regard to Josephus' silence about the coming one announced by John, it was observed that he had redacted the tradition in accordance with his anti-eschatological and anti-messianic position. Josephus' negative view of the popular prophets of his time (whom he considers to be deceivers and impostors, *πλάνοι γὰρ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἀπατεῶνες; οἱ δὲ γόητες καὶ ἀπατεῶνες ἄνθρωποι*)⁵¹⁹ was an even stronger reason either to minimise or to completely rid John of any association with such figures.

(iii) With respect to the third argument, we recall our conclusion above that while John had Jesus in mind, he did not explicitly identify Jesus as the coming one.⁵²⁰

By undergoing John's baptism, Jesus became a member of those who accepted John's proclamation, and therefore became part of group known as 'John's disciples' (Mk 2.18; 6.29 and par; Q=Matt 11.2//Lk 7.18; Lk 11.1; John 1.35-51; Acts 18.24-19.7). Like entering the Qumran community, John's baptism was an initiatory rite into the true Israel. Thus accepting John's baptism was not just an act of personal piety, but also an *Entscheidungsruf* (a call to decision); a decision to enter into a new existence, the new community of the people of God.⁵²¹

9.3 Jesus as John's Disciple

In the preceding section, we concluded that by accepting John's message and baptism, Jesus became part of a following known as 'John's disciples'. This movement embraced John's call to personal piety as a mark of entry into the new community of God's people. Jesus' appearance in the public limelight began as a member of John's group. It was as a follower of John that people naturally tried to understand him. According to the synoptists, Herod Antipas, reflecting (ἤκουσεν)

⁵¹⁷ See §4.3.4.

⁵¹⁸ Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, pp. 373-77.

⁵¹⁹ *War* 2.259; *Ant* 20.167-68.

⁵²⁰ §8.6.

⁵²¹ For a discussion of the ecclesial dimension to the ministry of John, see Meyer, *Aims*, p. 220.

the different opinions expressed publicly about Jesus, identified him with John: καὶ ἔλεγον ὅτι Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων ἐγγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνεργοῦσιν αἱ δυνάμεις ἐν αὐτῷ (Mk 6.14-15 and par). This statement which is part of the story of Antipas' execution of John, is set in the wider context of the mission of the twelve (Mk 6.7-13, 30 and par), whose activity, as representatives in Jesus' name, caused a stir among the people.⁵²²

Again, the same opinions are reiterated in another context in response to Jesus' question to his disciples: Τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ λέγοντες [ὅτι] Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστήν (Mk 8.27-28a and par). While this passage highlights Jesus' messianic identity, it corroborates the evidence about John as a popular prophetic figure, and how closely the populace associated Jesus with him. According to Grundmann, there are a number of parallels between John and Jesus which make this association plausible: (i) both were itinerant preachers; (ii) both carried out their ministries without identifying with any particular group; and (iii) both proclaimed repentance in view of the imminence of the coming kingdom.⁵²³

9.3.1 *Jesus' Estimation of John*

Jesus indicates the strong relationship between John and himself by witnessing to John. In his panegyric of John, Jesus begins with a series of rhetorical questions about the reasons why the crowds have come out in the wilderness to see John (Lk 7.24-26ab//Matt 11.7-9ab).⁵²⁴ Jesus then refers to John (i) as the prophet *par excellence* (καὶ περισσότερον προφήτου, Lk 7.26c//Matt 11.9c); (ii) as the prophesied forerunner of the Lord (Lk 7.27//Matt 7.10); and (iii) as the greatest man who ever lived (λέγω ὑμῖν, μείζων ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν Ἰωάννου οὐδεὶς ἐστίν (Lk 7.28a). In Matthew Jesus begins this saying with ἅμῃν, and has οὐκ ἐγγήγερται (Matt 11.11a).⁵²⁵ In this tribute Jesus not only confirms the crowd's

⁵²² On Herod Antipas, see §4.3.4.

⁵²³ W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* THNT 2 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1977), p. 170.

⁵²⁴ The statement in Lk 7.25//Matt 11.8 is probably meant to contrast John and Antipas, who authorized his arrest and execution (Mk 6.14-3 and par).

⁵²⁵ See A. Schlatter *Der Evangelist Matthäus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1929), p. 364-67.

opinion of John (Mk 11.30-33 and par), but goes beyond it. Jesus acknowledges John to be a prophet, like one of the OT prophets, who plays the role of a spokesman for God to call the people to repentance. Moreover, Jesus endorses John's role as the messenger and announcer of the Day of Yahweh.⁵²⁶ Jesus here identifies with John and underlines his significant role in the eschatological hour.

The above tribute is combined with an ambiguous statement: ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν (Lk 7.28b//Matt 11.11b). This juxtaposition of a remarkable tribute with a still more enigmatic note of depreciation has spawned a variety of interpretations: (i) that Jesus is referring to his own humility, or indicating that he is a disciple of John; (ii) that Jesus is here contrasting the state of the greatest of this present age with the future state of the least in the coming kingdom; (iii) that the least Christian is greater than the greatest Jew, because while the Christian is in the kingdom, the latter is not; and (iv) that while John prophesies of the messiah and heralds the arrival of the kingdom, he himself does not go beyond the threshold of the kingdom. This means that the least follower of Jesus who now enjoys the reality of the kingdom is greater than John.⁵²⁷ Partly because of the interpretative difficulties, all or part of this Q passage is often called into question. However, we have argued the authenticity of this pericope.⁵²⁸

Among the options canvassed above, the most likely is the view which sees the first half of Lk 7.28//Matt 11.11 as belonging to the train of thought in Q (Lk 7.26-27//Matt 11.9-10), while the second half refers to the state of affairs now made possible by the in-breaking of the kingdom. While John's place is niched in history, 'the least in the kingdom is greater yet because, living after the crucial revelatory and

⁵²⁶ See §4.3.3. See also France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971), pp. 91-92, 155.

⁵²⁷ For further discussion and bibliography, see D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew Sacra Pagina Series 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), pp. 155-62; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, pp. 237-38; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20* pp. 333-39; Carson, *Matthew EBC* 8, pp. 264-65; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 208-209; Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 32; T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), p. 70; A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 154.

⁵²⁸ §8.6.1.

eschatological events have occurred, he or she points to Jesus still more unambiguously than John'.⁵²⁹

The significance of John for the in-breaking of the kingdom is expressed in Q:

ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ ἕως ἄρτι ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται καὶ βιασταὶ ἄρπάζουσιν αὐτήν. πάντες γὰρ οἱ προφῆται καὶ ὁ νόμος ἕως Ἰωάννου ἐπροφήτευσαν· (Matt 11.12-13);

Ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται μέχρι Ἰωάννου· ἀπὸ τότε ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίζεται καὶ πᾶς εἰς αὐτήν βιάζεται (Lk 16.16).

A comparison of both texts yields interesting results. For example, the word order in Lk 16.16 corresponds to the reversed order of the verses in Matthew. Again, the arrangement in Luke in which 'the law and the prophets were until John', instead of Matthew's 'the prophets and the law', appears more natural. This, however, does not mean that the order in Luke is more original than Matthew's. The wording in Matthew 11.12//Luke 16.16 emphasises the present reality of the kingdom, and that this period commenced from the time of John. John's vituperative preaching, which precipitated his passion at the hands of both the religious and political establishment, effectively marked the beginning of the era of the kingdom. This would place John in the same era as Jesus. On the other hand, Matthew 11.13 can be interpreted as including John among 'all prophets and the law'. Alternatively, the phrase 'until John' can be read to make John the end of the era of the prophets and the law so as to exclude him from the new era with Jesus. It may be that Matthew was not happy about Jesus' effusive praise of John in Matt 11.11a and attempted to diffuse its impact in verse 13. It appears that each Evangelist has handled this piece of tradition in their own way. What is important is that most authorities see this Q passage as stemming from Jesus himself. For example, Käsemann writes:

Who but Jesus himself can look back in this way over the completed Old Testament epoch of salvation, not degrading the Baptist to a mere forerunner as the whole Christian community and the whole New Testament were to do, but drawing him to his side and – an enormity to Christian ears – presenting him as the initiator of the new aeon?⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ Carson, Matthew *EBC* 8, p. 265; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, pp. 337-38.

⁵³⁰ Käsemann, *Themes*, pp. 15-47, esp. p. 43. See also Jeremias, *Theology*, 1.46-47.

In this Q passage, Jesus testifies to John's important role, and to the eschatological distress which the heralds of the kingdom must experience.⁵³¹ In this respect JB becomes a prototype of all who suffer for the sake of the kingdom.

After eulogising John, Jesus continues to describe the public responses to his ministry and that of John (Q=Lk 7.31-35//Matt 11.16-19). Here Jesus and John are pitched in their respective style of ministry against an uncomprehending rejection by their contemporaries. Structurally, this passage is made up of a set of disparate elements: Lk 7.31-32 constitute a short parable; verses 33-34 represent an application of the parable, while verse 35 presents a wisdom saying which concludes the passage. The lack of unity does not necessarily disprove the authenticity of this Q passage as belonging to the historical ministry of Jesus. It is not entirely clear whether 'the men of this generation' are the same as the children who 'piped' and 'wailed' or those who refused to either 'dance' or 'weep'.⁵³² In either case they responded neither to the asceticism of John, nor the cheerful and uninhibited life-style of a Jesus who associated with sinners.⁵³³

There is no doubt that in his later ministry Jesus acted differently from John. However, here Jesus points out that the same insensitivity that greeted John's call to repentance has also prevented the people from celebrating the joy of entering into the 'kingdom' proclaimed by him. Thus in Q=Lk 7.31-35//Matt 11.16-19 Jesus, while acknowledging their different styles, identifies closely with John and places their ministries on the same level. Their different approaches point in the direction of continuity rather than discontinuity. This may be the import of the aphoristic saying in Lk 7.35//Matt 11.19b, where those who have an openness to the wisdom of God will perceive that in both John and Jesus God's wise plan has been put into action.

⁵³¹ For a survey of the various interpretations of this passage, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew* ICC 2.254-55; Wink, *John the Baptist*, pp. 20-23; Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment*, pp. 121-24.

⁵³² Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, pp. 259-64; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* 3rd edn. trans S. H. Hooke (London: SCM, 1972), p. 162; R. Leivestad, 'An Interpretation of Matt 11.19', *JBL* 71 (1952), 179-81; O. Linton, 'The Parable of the Children's Game: Baptist and Son of Man (Matt xi. 16-19=Lk vii. 31-35): A Synoptic Text-Critical, Structure, and Exegetical Investigation', *NTS* 22 (1976), 159-79.

⁵³³ Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1936), pp. 28-29.

Furthermore, Jesus not only defends his own authority by appealing to that of John, but also endorses John's baptism as approved by God (Mk 11.27-33; Lk 20.1-8; Matt 21.23-27). The chief priests, the scribes and the elders encountered Jesus in the temple and demanded to know the source of his authority for what he was doing: Ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς; ἢ τίς σοι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῇς; (Mk 11.28 and par; according to Matt 21.23—he omits the scribes—and Lk 20.1, Jesus was interrupted while he was teaching). Since Jesus was neither a scribe nor a member of any rabbinical school, it was a legitimate question, though in the present circumstances it was replete with craft and malice. Moreover, the temple was under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, which included, among others, chief priests, scribes and elders.⁵³⁴

This episode is best understood within the context of Jesus' action in the temple, where he drove out those trading in the court of the Gentiles, chastising them for turning the temple into 'a den of robbers' rather than 'a house of prayer' (Mk 11.15-17 and par).⁵³⁵ Jesus' response, in the form of a counter question, τὸ βάπτισμα τὸ Ἰωάννου ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἦν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων; (Mk 11.30 and par) placed his detractors in a quandary, since if they replied 'from heaven', they risked embarrassing themselves by falling foul of the charge of unbelief, and if they answered 'from men', they also risked offending the sensibilities of the people who esteemed JB to be a prophet. So they held their peace. Jesus also refused to respond to their question.⁵³⁶

This pericope highlights the popular opinion about John's prophetic status. The nuance of Jesus' question suggests that he not only identified with John's ministry, but also acknowledged his divine commission and implicitly claimed the same for himself. Like John, Jesus also sought the eschatological restoration of Israel.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁴ Beare, *Matthew*, p. 422.

⁵³⁵ It is worth noting here how Jesus' critical stance towards the temple establishment places him in a similar tradition to the Qumran Essenes and John. See §6.2.

⁵³⁶ For a discussion of the historicity of this story, see Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, pp. 723-26; J. M. Creed, *The Gospel According to St Luke: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* London: Macmillan, 1930, pp. 243f; cf. G. S. Shae, 'The Question on the Authority of Jesus', *NovT* 16 (1974), 1-29; Beare, *Matthew*, p. 422.

⁵³⁷ Meyer, *Aims*, p. 125; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 91-119.

A further interesting passage, admittedly only found in Matthew, is the parable of the two sons (Matt 21.28-32). In this parable Jesus contrasts the religious authorities (here represented by the chief priests and elders, Matt 21.23) with tax collectors and harlots, on the basis of their responses to the preaching of John. Some have questioned the authenticity of the parable. For example, according to Beare, it is unlikely that the chief priests and the elders, *en masse*, were accused of failing in their duties and obedience to God, nor is there any indication that either John or Jesus brought about a mass conversion of publicans and prostitutes, since taxes were still collected and there was no scarcity of prostitutes in Jerusalem.⁵³⁸ However, both Jesus' chastisement of the religious authorities for their disobedience and lack of understanding of the law despite their claimed allegiance to it, and the positive reception of the ministries of John and Jesus by the social outcasts in contrast to the negative response of the Jewish leaders, recur in the Gospel tradition (e.g. Q=Lk 3.7-14//Matt 3.7-12; Mk 11.15-19, 27-33; 12.1-12, 38-40 and par; Lk 14.15-24//Matt 22.1-10; Lk 15.11-32).⁵³⁹

Furthermore, the systematic subordination of John to Jesus by the Evangelists makes it unlikely that Matthew would link John and Jesus in such a way as to suggest that their ministries were almost identical (Matt 21.32). Jeremias rightly posits that while the application to John appears alien in the context, it 'is not due to Matthew, but must have been already effected in the earlier tradition' (cf. Lk 7.29-30).⁵⁴⁰

While Matthew uses this parable to emphasise the Jewish leaders' disobedience and guilt, it is significant that the parable assimilates the ministries of both John and Jesus by comparing the responses of the religious authorities with those of the people they despise. By referring to John's ministry as 'the way of righteousness' Jesus not only endorsed it, but also suggested that his own ministry was a renewal of the opportunity offered through John's preceding ministry.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ Beare, *Matthew*, pp. 423-24; H. Merkel, 'Das Gleichnis von den "ungleichen Söhnen" [Matth. xxi.28-32]', *NTS* 20 (1974), 254-61.

⁵³⁹ §9.4.

⁵⁴⁰ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, pp. 80-81; D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* NCB (London: Oliphants, 1972; Carson, *Matthew EBC* vol 8 pp. 448-50.

⁵⁴¹ For further analysis and redaction of this parable, see Gundry, *Matthew*, pp. 418-24.

9.3.2 *Other Considerations*

In his proclamation as a forerunner of Jesus, John incorporated a message of warning and judgment (Matt 3.7-12; Lk 3.7-14). Jesus, according to Matthew, began his ministry with exactly the same warning (Matt 4.17; cf 3.2). D. Wenham, in commenting on these identical statements, observes that 'although it is often assumed that Matthew has conformed John to Jesus, giving John Jesus' message, it is not impossible that Matthew has in fact correctly retained what could have been rather embarrassing information to the Christians – namely, that Jesus actually took over John's eschatological message (primitive 'M' tradition, as the sayings about only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel)'.⁵⁴² This suggestion is given more weight by Josephus' comment that John not only called his audience to the rite of baptism, but also exhorted them to a life of virtue and righteousness toward one another, and piety toward God (*Ant.* 18.117). Matthew may therefore be right in recording that John and Jesus began their ministries with this identical warning message because of the imminent eschatological judgment. Moreover, the Evangelist is here indicating that the beginning of Jesus' public career is inextricably bound up with the public career of John. Their ministries were prophetic appeals of repentance to the people on the threshold of a new community of Israel.

It is also significant that the fourth Gospel, in spite of its systematic subordination of John to Jesus (1.7-8, 15, 19-27; 3.28-30), records an overlapping baptising activity between the two, in close proximity to each other (John 3.22-24; cf. 4.1-2). In 3.26 some of John's disciples refer to Jesus vaguely as 'he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, here he is baptising, and all are going to him'. Beside the note of discipleship, there is an indirect reference to a possible controversy between the early Church and the disciples of John. JB's disclaimer in John 1.8a, 20 may be perceived as a polemical rebuttal against the elevation of John above Jesus.⁵⁴³ However, this later controversy between the Baptist group and early Church should not

⁵⁴² I am indebted to my supervisor's unpublished paper on 'Some Thoughts on Baptism in the NT'.

⁵⁴³ Käsemann, *Themes*, pp. 136-48; cf. Scobie, *John the Baptist*, pp. 187-202.

be projected back into the earliest days of Jesus when he was but an extension of the ministry of John.

The fourth Evangelist again indicates the cordial relations between JB and Jesus by recounting that at a certain point in his career, when the threats on his life became very serious, Jesus retired to the Jordan valley, to the place where his predecessor had earlier carried out his baptism, καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖ for an unspecified period of time (John 10.40). The Johannine evidence of friendly relations between JB and Jesus is reinforced by the synoptic tradition which indicates that, after the death of JB, his disciples naturally turned to Jesus (Matt 14.12).

In summary, after his baptism by John, Jesus remained with John for an unspecified period of time as one of his disciples. As Murphy-O'Connor rightly points out, the length of time that Jesus spent with John should not be underestimated.⁵⁴⁴ It would at least take sufficient time for John and Jesus to know each other and to make it possible for some of John's disciples to transfer their allegiance to Jesus. This conclusion is supported by our discussion of ὀπίσω μου (with its predominantly master-disciple sense).⁵⁴⁵ Some perceive such a close relationship between Jesus and John at this point of their ministry that they describe Jesus as 'John's assistant', 'John's right-hand man or protégé', or state that 'Jesus was to John the Baptist as Elisha was to Elijah'.⁵⁴⁶ In spite of the tensions and differences that may have arisen between the followers of JB and Jesus, a harmonious relationship existed between the two men until the arrest of JB, when Jesus changed the physical area of his activity.

9.4 Jesus the Baptist

9.4.1 *Analysis of the Historical Tradition*

Apart from the baptism of John, there are only two direct references to the rite of baptism in the synoptic tradition (Matt 28.19; Mk 16.16). The Matthean reference

⁵⁴⁴ Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus', 359-74.

⁵⁴⁵ §8.4.

⁵⁴⁶ Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus', 359-74; Webb, 'John the Baptist and his Relationship to Jesus', in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, pp. 179-229.

occurs in the context of a trinitarian formula about the future baptismal practice of the disciples. It is generally assumed that this is an anachronistic reading back of the later Church's baptismal activity, though some have argued on the contrary.⁵⁴⁷ The Marcan citation, which occurs in the so-called 'longer ending' of the Gospel, is omitted in many manuscripts and is rejected as spurious by most early authorities.⁵⁴⁸

The synoptists have no account of Jesus baptising in Judea, though there is an implication that he was in Judea until John's arrest and the beginning of his Galilean ministry (Mk 1.14//Matt 4.12; cf. Lk 3.19; 4.14). No explanation is given as to why Jesus did not return to Galilee after his baptism by John, remaining instead in Judea until John was arrested.⁵⁴⁹ There is also no hint in the synoptics that in Galilee Jesus carried on baptising. Scholarly opinion is divided on the question of whether the Jesus movement preoccupied itself with baptism as did John's group. Some suggest that Jesus carried out a baptising ministry, but stopped after the arrest and incarceration of John; others posit that the complete silence of the synoptists indicates that Jesus did not participate in John's baptismal activity.⁵⁵⁰ The idea that Jesus baptised (as we find in the fourth Gospel), it has been argued, was created when John's baptism was adopted as a Christian initiation sacrament. At the same time there was a subtle attempt to diminish the significance of John. The idea of an overlapping baptising ministry was therefore simply an attempt to underline the triumphs of Jesus and his superiority over John (John 3.26), and to provide an occasion for the witness of John (John 3.27-30).

After all, if Jesus really baptised, why do we have to wait until after Easter for the baptismal command (Matt 28.19; Mk 16.16)? The conclusion given is that Jesus probably worked independently of John from the very beginning, discarding baptism

⁵⁴⁷ For further discussion, see France, *Matthew*, p. 415; Carson, 'Matthew' *EBC* 8, p. 598; B. J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28. 16-20* SBLDS 19 (Missoula: Scholars, 1974), pp. 151-75; D. Wenham, 'The Resurrection Narratives in Matthew's Gospel', *TynBul* 24 (1973), 21-54; Hill, *Matthew*, pp. 29-34, 360-62.

⁵⁴⁸ C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with an Introduction* AB 27 (NY: Doubleday, 1986), pp. 672-76; Anderson, *Mark*, pp. 351-62; J. K. Elliot, 'The Text and Language of the Endings to Mark's Gospel', *ThZ* 27 (1971), 255-62; V. Taylor, *St Mark*, p. 610; H. B. Swete, *The Gospel According to St Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1898), xcvi-cv.

⁵⁴⁹ Meyer, *Aims*, p. 122.

⁵⁵⁰ Meyer, *Aims*, p. 129; R. Leivestad, *Jesus in his own Perspective* trans (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), p. 37.

which did not correspond to his message of the rule of God. His unique and sublime message went beyond the eschatological call to repentance preached by John. Moreover, in the mission of the disciples, which is a reflection of the work of Jesus, there is no reference to baptism. Consequently, Backhaus concludes:

Also kann man eine Taufpraxis Jesu nur in einer 'apokryphen' Anfangszeit ansetzen; er hätte dann die Johannestaufe—nicht etwa eine Art 'Zwischentaufe' oder gar das christliche Sakrament—gespendet. Aber Joh 4,1 setzt die Taufe als Initiationsritus, also als Gemeindesakrament, voraus, und ein solches Verständnis ist für die 'Anfangszeit' schlechterdings auszuschließen. So spricht in toto mehr gegen als für eine Taufpraxis Jesu, und die Frage entscheidet sich mit der redaktionsgeschichtlichen Untersuchung, die ein johanneisches Darstellungsinteresse an der Simultaneität der Taufen nachweisen kann.⁵⁵¹

Yet in the midst of these suppositions is the inescapable question: why did baptism become so important again after the Easter event? In other words, if Jesus had such close links with John, and if baptism both preceded and followed the ministry of Jesus, does the explicit silence of the synoptists really suggest that Jesus did not practise baptism, or that he in fact ceased his baptismal activity after the arrest of John?

9.4.2 *John 3.22-4.3: A Source-Critical Analysis*

The fourth Evangelist indicates that after his baptism, and an initial period of following John as a disciple, Jesus soon started his own baptising ministry in Judea prior to the imprisonment of John – a period on which the synoptic Gospels are silent. The key text is John 3.22-24. In their overlapping baptising activities, certain frictions are said to have developed, the significance of which is hard to assess given the scant details (3.25-26). This is followed by a clear testimony from John regarding the superiority of Jesus (3.27-30). The Christological reflections in verses 31-36 continue to elaborate the origin, significance and superiority of Jesus begun in verses 25-26. Again, Jesus is reported to have engaged in the baptismal practice of John, despite the editorial comment to the contrary (4.1-2).⁵⁵²

Attempts have been made to discover the setting and source of John 3.22-4.3. Structurally, it is suggested that 3.22-30 interrupt the smooth sequence between verses

⁵⁵¹ Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, pp. 264.

⁵⁵² Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 68.

21 and 31, and should therefore be excised from the present position and transposed to be read after 2.12. This is because the previous episode took place in Jerusalem (2.23), which is part of Judea. It makes no sense to say again that 'after this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea' (3.22), for they were already there. The Christological meditations in verses 31-36 also seem to interrupt the immediate narrative context (cf. verse 23f): they are better placed between 3.12 and 3.13, integrated into the dialogue with Nicodemus.⁵⁵³ There are also apparent contradictions in 3.26 and 4.1 against 3.32, and 4.1 against 4.2.

In view of such problems, it is easy to dismiss the entire passage as Johannine fiction. Some have tried to solve the apparent inconsistencies by postulating disparate sources which the fourth Evangelist has collated,⁵⁵⁴ while others have recognised a displacement of the entire section in its present context. Yet others, while recognising some contradictions, have argued that John 3.22-4.3 is based on a source replete with good tradition, and that this passage should not be dismissed as a Johannine creation.⁵⁵⁵

In what follows, we shall test the above hypotheses to find out if John 3.22-4.3 can stand on its own as a coherent self-contained unit. For the purpose of our exegesis, we maintain the present order of 3.22-4.3 without resorting to the above transpositions.

9.4.3 *John 3.22-4.3: A Historical-Critical Analysis*

In John 3.1-21 Jesus engages in a dialogue with Nicodemus. Verses 22-23 resume the discussion of the relationship between the Baptist and Jesus (cf. 1.19-51). The suggestion that εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν (verse 22) should be read 'to the Judean countryside' is not improbable, since the Nicodemus dialogue is specifically said to

⁵⁵³ For a discussion of the theories on structure and displacements, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, pp. 43-56; J. Wilson, 'The Integrity of John 3: 22-36', *JSNT* 10 (1981), 34-41; Schnackenburg, *St John* vol 1, pp. 380-92; Lindars, *John*, pp. 162-72; Barrett, *St John*, p. 219; Bultmann, *John*, pp. 130-75; Dodd, *Tradition*, pp. 279-87; — *Interpretation*, pp. 308-11; H. G. C. Macgregor, *The Gospel of John* MNTC (1928; repr. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933), pp. 65-85; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St John* ICC vol 1 ed. A. H. McNeile (1928; repr. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; 1958), xxiii-xxiv.

⁵⁵⁴ Sanders & Mastin, *St John*, p. 132.

⁵⁵⁵ Jeremias, *Theology*, 1.45-46.

have taken place in Jerusalem (2.23-3.2).⁵⁵⁶ According to the Evangelist, Jesus remained in the vicinity and baptised (καὶ ἐκεῖ διέτριβεν μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ ἐβάπτιζεν). The iterative imperfect tense (διέτριβεν and ἐβάπτιζεν) shows that Jesus continued this activity for a while in Judea. This phrase is superfluous 'unless it is understood as an emphasis designed to counteract the opinion that the visit was brief, and the personal involvement of Jesus was insignificant'.⁵⁵⁷ Meanwhile, John was also baptising in 'Aenon near Salim', which is located in the north, in Samaria.⁵⁵⁸

The statement in verse 24 (οὐπω γὰρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης) may, at first sight, appear superfluous, but here the Evangelist drops a hint which may help us to clarify the synoptic record (Mk 1.14 and par; Lk 3.20-22). The synoptists are silent about what happened between Jesus' baptism in Judea and his Galilean ministry because of the embarrassment and frustration which the baptism of Jesus by John caused the early Church. The fourth Evangelist, however, fills this rather long gap by saying that, during this intervening period, Jesus engaged in a baptising activity in Judea. This was prior to the commencement of Jesus' Galilean ministry, and, of course, before the arrest and execution of John by Antipas (Mk 6.17-30 and par; *Ant* 18.116-119).⁵⁵⁹

Some see in the next statement Ἐγένετο οὖν ζήτησις ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν Ἰωάννου μετὰ Ἰουδαίου περὶ καθαρισμοῦ (John 3.25) hints of a polemic mounted by the fourth Evangelist against the Baptist followers; others that Jesus is shown to be superseding the purificatory rites of Judaism.⁵⁶⁰ Certainly, the debate is about purification (cf. John 2.6, where the same word appears), which takes place between the disciples of John and a Jew (μετὰ Ἰουδαίου).⁵⁶¹ According to

⁵⁵⁶ John 3.22 (NIV).

⁵⁵⁷ Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus', 359-74.

⁵⁵⁸ Lindars, *John*, pp. 164-65; Brown, *John* (i-xii), p. 151; W. F. Albright, 'Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St John', in W. D. Davies & D. Daube, *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1956), pp. 153-71; — 'Some Observations favouring the Palestinian Origin of the Gospel of John', *HTR* 17 (1924), 93-94.

⁵⁵⁹ E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* ed F. N. Davey (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), pp. 225-32.

⁵⁶⁰ J. Wilson, 'The Integrity of John 3: 22-36', *JSNT* 10 (1981), 34-41; J. Marsh, *Saint John* PC (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 191-98.

⁵⁶¹ For a discussion of the textual difficulties posed by this verse see B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: UBS, 1975), p. 205; Barrett, *St John*, p. 221; M. Goguel, *Au seuil de l'Évangile: Jean-Baptiste* (Paris: Payot, 1928), pp. 86-95.

Lindars, a fruitful line of investigation into this verse is to study the background of comparable material in the synoptic Gospels (cf. Mk 7.1-23; Matt 15.1-20):

We may assume that this was comparable to Mk 2.18. Here the Baptist's disciples are mentioned along with the Pharisees in connection with fasting, and the question is put to Jesus why he does not follow the same practice (his answer includes bridal imagery, as in verse 29). If we turn to the parallel in Mt 9.14, we find that Matthew has simplified the text, so that the disciples of the Baptist themselves come to Jesus and ask the question. Our verse here looks very like the situation in Mark, in that the disciples of the Baptist and the Jew (or the disciples of Jesus) are bracketed together in order to introduce the subject (purification); but like Matthew, in that the disciples of the Baptist then come and ask the question (hence verse 26 replaces a continuation such as 'and they came to *Jesus* and said...').⁵⁶²

Nevertheless, while recourse to the synoptic material for clarification is helpful, it seems to us that this suggestion fails to take into consideration the immediate context of this verse.

In order to gain a better perspective on this verse, we need to look at verses 26-30. A question is raised by one of John's disciples who is concerned about the apparent success of Jesus' baptising and hence of the Jesus movement (verse 26). This anxiety affords John an opportunity to dispel the fears of his disciples with an aphorism (verses 27, 30) and the parable of the bridegroom and his friend (verse 29). In this parable the bridegroom is a cryptogram for Jesus, and the friend of the groom is John.

The fourth Evangelist here employs snippets of authentic traditional material comparable to that found in the synoptic Gospels, which has been reworked stylistically into his story, though it is likely that he did so independently of the synoptists.⁵⁶³ Similarly, he uses the overlapping baptising of John and Jesus to good effect for his Christology. It is plausible to suggest that the real value in verses 25-26, if they are not seen as reflecting editorial concerns of the Evangelist, is that they refer to the relative merits of the baptisms of both John and Jesus, rather than that of Jewish purification rites and John's baptism.⁵⁶⁴

Again, it could be that the strong cordial relations between John and Jesus which made it possible for the disciples of John to turn to Jesus after John's death (Matt

⁵⁶² Lindars, *John*, p. 166.

⁵⁶³ Dodd, *Tradition*, pp. 283-84.

⁵⁶⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 52; Bultmann, *John*, p. 171.

14.12), could not have been maintained if Jesus had now abandoned the baptismal practice which had been the hallmark of their master's ministry. It is also possible that hints about any rivalry between Jesus and John were artificially created by the early Christians as they sought to elevate Jesus above JB.

Was Jesus' preaching and baptising ministry limited to Judea? The obvious implication of John 3.22-24, in the wider context of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4), is that the ministries of both John and Jesus were conducted among both Jews and Samaritans. If 'Aenon near Salim' was located in the Samaritan region (John 3.23), as has been persuasively argued, this would further attest a mission of both John and Jesus in the heart of Samaritan territory (John 4.34-38; Acts 8.5-25).⁵⁶⁵ Murphy O'Connor, in a plausible reconstruction of the simultaneous and integrated ministries of John and Jesus, suggests that there must have been a mutual agreement between the two for Jesus to go over to the territory of Judea where John had already worked (Mk 1.5 and par). As leader of the group, John might have taken upon himself the task of evangelising the Samaritans, who were not on good terms with the Jews. However, this would have been rendered more problematic, given John's priestly origin, which connected him with the temple establishment in Jerusalem, a group which the Samaritans strongly opposed. It is therefore not surprising that Jesus should be more successful than John (John 3.26; 4.1).⁵⁶⁶

It is sometimes supposed, even among those who are inclined to give historical credence to the Johannine tradition about Jesus' early baptismal practice, that, in view of the silence of the synoptic tradition, Jesus stopped this rite when he moved to Galilee after the arrest of John.⁵⁶⁷ It is assumed that it was now politically dangerous for Jesus to maintain his links with a prophet who had incurred the displeasure of the political establishment.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁵ J. A. T. Robinson, 'The "Others" of John 4.38', in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London: SCM, 1962), pp. 61-66; Cullmann, *The Early Church*, pp. 185-92, who argues that the 'others' were Philip and his helpers; Bruce, *Acts*, p. 216.

⁵⁶⁶ Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus', pp. 359-74.

⁵⁶⁷ Brown, *John* (i-xii), p. 155.

⁵⁶⁸ Jeremias, *Theology*, 1.46, esp. note 2.

But the Gospel evidence has so far indicated the importance of baptism for both John and Jesus. For them it was a mark identifying the new community of the restored people of God. According to the account of the origins of the early Christian community in Acts, baptism was a key feature of the origins of the Jesus movement, as an initiation rite into the new community of God's people (Acts 1.21-26). It could also be argued that the redefinition of baptism in Matt 28.19 is a reflection of its significance in the early ministry of Jesus. According to M. Davies, 'it assumes that baptism had replaced circumcision as the rite of entry into the covenant community and ignores the early disputes among the Christians about the terms on which Gentiles should enter the church (e.g. Galatians 2; Acts 15)'.⁵⁶⁹

9.4.4 Summary

It is probable, on both source and historical-critical grounds, that Jesus carried out a baptising ministry alongside JB in Judea. This piece of information emanating from the fourth Gospel can be trusted as a historical account of the overlapping baptising ministries of John and Jesus. This conclusion is further reinforced by the ambivalence of the synoptic account of Jesus' baptism by John, a source of embarrassment and frustration for the early Church. The significance of baptism for both John and Jesus is borne out by the account of the origins of Christianity in the Book of Acts, where baptism marked an initiation into the primitive Christian community.

9.5 Baptism and the Death of Jesus in the Synoptic Tradition

John's water baptism in which Jesus participated is not the only baptism referred to in the Gospel tradition. There are two further references to baptism in the synoptic tradition (Mk 10.38-40; Lk 12.50). The Marcan saying is found in the context of Jesus' response to the request from James and John, the sons of Zebedee, to grant them positions of eminence in the kingdom: δύνασθε πλεῖν τὸ ποτήριον ὃ ἐγὼ

⁵⁶⁹ M. Davies, *Matthew—Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), p. 207.

πίνω ἢ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθῆναι; (Mk 10.38; cf. Matt 20.22, where the second clause is missing).

In Luke, Jesus describes how sometimes the reception of his message can mean division among family members. He first speaks of having come to throw fire on the earth and his longing for it to be kindled, and then continues: βάπτισμα δὲ ἔχω βαπτισθῆναι, καὶ πῶς συνέχομαι ἕως ὅτου τελεσθῇ. It is not clear how these two passages relate to each other, but there is a good reason to see an authentic saying of Jesus lying behind the Marcan and the Lucan sayings. The context of both sayings is eschatological – the thought of the coming kingdom and the fire which would cause division, implying an idea of separation through judgment – in which the necessity for Jesus to undergo baptism of suffering, in order to bring about the eschatological events, is underlined.

It is very striking that Jesus should refer to his suffering and death as baptism; neither saying refers directly to the baptismal practice of both John and Jesus. This has been taken by Cullmann to explain why Jesus did not himself baptise; for the meaning of his baptism – his own death for others – cannot be attributed to other baptisms.⁵⁷⁰ Similarly, D. Wenham suggests that it was Jesus' death as baptism and not water baptism which was to bring about the eschatological new age. Jesus' passion might appropriately be called his baptism. The fate of John might have signalled to Jesus, perhaps for the first time, or in a more focused way, that the eschatological kingdom would not follow directly from John's baptism 'for the forgiveness of sins', but was going to be preceded by suffering such as John knew (cf. Mk 8.27-38).⁵⁷¹

However, as Beasley-Murray has rightly argued, it is wrong to assume that the βαπτίζω/βάπτισμα words in this context have nothing to do with water baptism as such.⁵⁷² It is true that baptism is used as a metaphor for the impending passion of Jesus, but this metaphorical use may suggest the significance of baptism to Jesus. In the light of the preceding discussion of Jesus' commitment to John's baptism, it is

⁵⁷⁰ Cullmann, *Baptism*, p. 19.

⁵⁷¹ D. Wenham, 'Some Thoughts on Baptism in the NT' (an unpublished paper).

⁵⁷² Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, pp. 54-55, 72-77.

hazardous to suggest that Jesus' perception of his death as baptism precluded him from engaging in water baptism.

Historically, it is possible to see John's arrest as some sort of catalyst to Jesus' own thinking that the kingdom was not going to come in quite the straightforward way that John supposed, and that it was going to come via suffering not just in an act of divine intervention. However, it is noteworthy that Jesus should metaphorically refer to his passion as baptism. This shows how significant baptism had become in Jesus' thinking.

9.6 What Happened in Galilee?

9.6.1 *Arguments Against Baptising in Galilee*

A number of arguments have been adduced against any baptising by Jesus and his followers in Galilee. In addition to the objections raised at §9.4.1 above, the following may be noted:

(1) There is no reference to any baptismal practice by Jesus and his followers in the synoptic Gospels, notably in the mission discourses where we might expect a command to baptise (Mk 6.7-13//Matt 10.5-15//Lk 9.1-6; Q=Matt 9.37-38//Lk 10.1-16). This may suggest that baptism was confined to the beginnings of his ministry, south of Galilee, and prior to the incarceration of John.

(2) Even the fourth Gospel may be thought to show that Jesus was not very keen on baptism: we are told that it was some of his followers, not Jesus himself, who baptised in Judea (John 4.2). Moreover, Jesus left Judea when he heard that people were openly talking about him baptising and making more disciples than John (John 4.1). When Jesus finally broke away from John, going north into Galilee, nothing is said about any ongoing baptism. We may assume that he asserted his independence by not baptising nor enjoining it on his disciples. The fourth Gospel suggests that it was some of Jesus' followers (who had originally been followers of John) who were keen on baptism and it was they who, after Jesus' death, reinstated it. But Jesus himself was not enthusiastic about baptism. It may be that Jesus in his ministry did not want to

be seen in competition with John, or even that he did not want to be too closely associated with him.

(3) If the symbolism of John's baptism was to do with the Jordan and desert – Exodus symbolism – then it would not be the same in Galilee. Beasley-Murray points out that for the sake of tradition and convenience a baptising ministry was more suitable for the Jordan valley than the villages and towns of Galilee.⁵⁷³

(4) The political implications of John's proclamation and denunciation of Herod Antipas, which eventually led to his arrest and subsequent execution, may have created a practical danger for Jesus if he continued an association with John. It was therefore pragmatically sensible not only to change location when John was arrested, but also to change the style of ministry. Galilee was still Herod's territory, though he ruled not as an independent monarch, but as a suzerain of the Roman Empire. Thus with many dangers and problems lurking, it was expedient for Jesus to have a change of vision, or perhaps a development in the understanding of his mission. This precipitated the non-baptising phase of his ministry in Galilee.

These objections constitute a serious problem to any suggestion that Jesus baptised in Galilee, but are they as formidable as they appear?

9.6.2 *Evidence of Baptising in Galilee*

The following counter-arguments are to be noted:

(1) Jesus baptised in Judea and the early Church baptised. There is good evidence for Jesus baptising in a preliminary Judean ministry (John 3.22-26; 4.1-3),⁵⁷⁴ and indisputable evidence for the early Church baptising.

(2) When Jesus came to Galilee, there is nothing to suggest that he ceased baptising – except the silence of the synoptists and the fourth Evangelist.

(3) Why would Jesus have stopped baptising in Galilee? There are no good reasons to explain this:

⁵⁷³ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 71.

⁵⁷⁴ A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* vol 1 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1883), pp. 336-50, 364-94.

(3.1) With respect to the symbolism of John's baptism, it is noteworthy that John's baptism was not limited to the wilderness of Judea. John baptised in different places along the Jordan. So we could have Jordan symbolism in southern Galilee, as well as elsewhere.

(3.2) While the arrest, imprisonment and execution of John by Antipas did have a political motivation,⁵⁷⁵ there is no evidence that Antipas' continued rulership of Galilee posed a similar threat to Jesus. According to Luke, at some point in Jesus' public ministry, there was a warning from some friendly Pharisees of Antipas' intentions to kill Jesus (Lk 13.31-33). But it is not clear whether Antipas really wanted to kill Jesus as these Pharisees would have us believe. It appears that Antipas rather held Jesus in awe, as seen in the story of the execution of John. Even if he did want to kill Jesus at this point, it is significant that Antipas showed no intense desire to remove Jesus when, according to Luke, the opportunity presented itself at the trial in Jerusalem (Lk 23.6-16).

It may be that Jesus deliberately avoided Herodian politics (perhaps the fate of John was still fresh in Jesus' mind), or that Antipas did not find anything offensive in the ministry of Jesus which would pose a threat to the peace of his territory. Freyne suggests that as far as criticism of the Herodian court was concerned, Jesus, unlike John, confined himself to a social critique of more general applicability (Q=Matt 11.8//Lk 7.25).⁵⁷⁶ It appears that Jesus attracted less public attention than John, and he seems not to have attacked Antipas or his government.

Jesus, in carrying out his ministry, seemed to have deliberately avoided the main Herodian centres in Galilee, especially Sepphoris and Tiberias. The Gospel evidence suggests that apart from a few large centres like Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida,⁵⁷⁷ which he visited regularly, Jesus' itinerary in Galilee was mainly in the

⁵⁷⁵ §4.3.4.

⁵⁷⁶ S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), pp. 135-75. For Antipas' success as an effective power-broker for Rome, see Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian. A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington: Notre Dame University Press, 1980), pp. 122-34; M. Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee A.D. 132-212* (Totowa, N.J: Rowman and Allenheld, 1983), pp. 81-84. Jesus may have read Antipas' character correctly when he referred to him as the fox (Lk 13.32).

⁵⁷⁷ For example, Mk 1.21; 2.1 and par; Matt 11.20-24; Lk 10.13-15.

countryside (though there were occasional incursions into the region of Tiberias, e.g. John 6.1-4). It is likely that his avoidance of the major political centres, like Tiberias, had nothing to do with their ritual impurity, since the Gospels attest to Jesus' openness and interaction with Gentiles, as well as his apparent disregard for religious isolationism on the basis of the purity code (Mk 7.24-30; Matt 15.21-28; Mk 1.40-46 and par).⁵⁷⁸

While it is evident from above that Jesus was careful not to get involved directly in Herodian politics, it appears that security was not his primary concern, else 'he would have gone further north into Tyre and Sidon or the territory of Philip'.⁵⁷⁹ Murphy-O'Connor plausibly suggests that Jesus' main concern in Galilee, as 'John's senior disciple' was to continue the ministry of his master, though he seems to have exceeded the evidence by postulating that Jesus left his disciples to carry on baptising in Judea, where there was relatively no opposition, while he took on Galilee, where there was real danger. We have argued that Antipas' Galilee did not pose any serious threat to Jesus' ministry.

(3.3) Did Jesus experience a change of focus which ended his demand for repentance sealed by baptism when he realised that he could heal and exorcise (Lk 11.20//Matt 12.20), as proposed by Hollenbach?⁵⁸⁰ While Hollenbach is right in noting the original strong link between John and Jesus, he exaggerates the developing differences between the two figures. There is no evidence that the intensity of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom (which undoubtedly goes beyond John's proclamation) and his ability to exorcise snuffed out Jesus' baptising in Galilee. Similarly, Sanders' argument that Jesus diverged from the pattern of John's ministry by offering 'tax collectors and sinners' (Mk 2.15 and par; Q=Lk 7.34//Matt 11.19) entrance into the kingdom 'without requiring repentance as normally understood' fails to do justice to the evidence.⁵⁸¹ Here, too, while not minimising the differences, we have shown how

⁵⁷⁸ According to Josephus, and also reflected in latter rabbinic legends, Jewish graves were desecrated in the construction of Tiberias (*Ant* 18.39); L. Levine, 'R. Simeon b. Yohai and the Purification of Tiberias: History and Tradition', *HUCA* 49 (1978), 143-85.

⁵⁷⁹ Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus', pp. 359-74.

⁵⁸⁰ §1.2.4.

⁵⁸¹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 206.

John's understanding of repentance, with its ethical content, is not far removed from that of Jesus.⁵⁸² Jesus himself points out the continuity between his message and John's in the episode of the farmer and threshing floor.⁵⁸³ It is also probable that the respondents to Jesus' message demonstrated this by undergoing baptism as a rite of passage into the community of believers, a rite which continued in the early Church, though redefined after the Easter event (now in the name of the risen Christ).⁵⁸⁴

(4) Positively, there are good reasons to suppose that Jesus and his disciples continued to baptise in Galilee:

(4.1) If Jesus restrained his disciples from baptising in Galilee, we have to admit that the reason is shrouded in mystery.⁵⁸⁵

(4.2) One advantage to the view that Jesus conducted a baptising ministry in Galilee is that this would explain what the followers of Jesus expected people to do in response to their proclamation of the kingdom. It is not clear from the mission discourses how people were expected to demonstrate their repentance and reception of the message of the kingdom. Perhaps, therefore, they were to be baptised.

(5) The silence and ambivalence of the synoptists on the question of Jesus' baptising ministry may be explained by:

(5.1) The embarrassment that Jesus' baptism caused the early Church.

(5.2) The subtle attempt by the synoptists not only to emphasise the superiority and uniqueness of Jesus, but also to distance him from John.

(5.3) The fact that baptism was not a controversial issue. The major confrontations and opposition to Jesus' ministry came mainly from the religious leaders and were mainly on the question of the proper interpretation of Jewish law, on issues such as the sabbath (Mk 2.23-28; 3.1-6 and par; Lk 13.10-17; 14.1-6); food and purity (Mk 7.1-23; 1.40-44 and par.; Lk 10.30-37); tithes and offerings (Matt 5.23-24; 9.13; 12.7; 23.23); prayer and fasting (Mk 2.18-22 and par; Matt 6.5-18; 7.7-11; Lk 11.2-4); oaths and vows (Matt 5.34-37; 23.16-22); and blasphemy (Mk 2.1-12 and

⁵⁸² § 1.2.5.

⁵⁸³ § 8.5.5.

⁵⁸⁴ § 9.7.

⁵⁸⁵ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 70.

par; 14.61-64; Matt 26.65).⁵⁸⁶ There is no mention of any controversy on baptism. The Gospel evidence indicates that the charge which led to Jesus' death was first framed in the religious context, and it was only (though historically controversial) when that accusation seemed to be crumbling that he was made to appear as a political subversive.⁵⁸⁷ It is therefore probable that the failure of the synoptists to mention baptism is due to the focusing of interest on the more critical developments of Jesus' ministry.

So, we conclude that (i) there are much stronger arguments in favour of Jesus continuing in the baptism of John in both Judea and Galilee. (ii) The general political situation of Antipas' Galilee did not form a serious obstacle to the ministry of Jesus, and that Jesus and his movement did not constitute a threat to Antipas and his government of Galilee. (iii) Jesus appears to have deliberately avoided any confrontation with Antipas by concentrating his ministry among the peasants in the countryside, away from the main Herodian centres, such as Sepphoris and Tiberias, though there were frequent forays into these centres (Luke indicates that Jesus had a number of sympathisers from among the wealthy and the powerful members of the land, e.g. Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, Lk 8.1-3). (iv) While it is difficult to know exactly the kind of impression that the execution of John by Antipas made on Jesus, we have shown that, at least, it may have been partly responsible for Jesus' tactical decision not only to change location from Judea to Galilee, but also to avoid the main centres of Herodian power as much as possible. John 4.1 states that the Judean ministry was abandoned as a result of Pharisaic opposition, while in the synoptics it is mentioned with reference to the arrest of John. While this move was not precipitated solely for security reasons, there is no hint that Jesus abandoned baptism in Galilee, nor the core of his message which, according to Matthew, was identical to that of John (Matt 3.2; 4.17; cf. Mk 1.14, 39; Lk 4.14-15). (v) The issues on which Jesus was taken to task were mainly religious, and the confrontations were between him and

⁵⁸⁶ Sanders, *Historical Figure*, pp. 205-36; – *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1990), pp. 1-96; Horsley, 'High Priests and the Politics in Roman Palestine', *JSJ* 17 (1986), 23-55.

⁵⁸⁷ Mk 14.55-64; 15.1-32; Matt 26.59-66; 27.1-2, 11-26, 32-44; Lk 22.66-23.25, 35-38; John 18.19-24, 28-19.22.

the religious establishment, notably the scribes and the Pharisees. The primary area of dispute, according to the evidence, had to do with the interpretation of Jewish law. Baptism was not among the contentious issues, hence the silence of our sources.

9.7 The Link Between the Baptisms of John, Jesus and the Post-Easter Church

We are now in a position to draw together the different strands of the argument pursued so far. It has been established that Jesus' baptising ministry was in a real sense a continuation of John's baptism. Baptism as an external act is thus not the creation of Jesus. At the beginning of Acts, Luke re-echoes the promise 'for John baptised with water, but before many days you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 1.5; cf. Mk 1.8). As it stands, this text could be taken as differentiating Christian baptism from John's baptism – one with water, and the other with the Holy Spirit. But it is evident that Christian baptism turns out to be with water, just as much as John's baptism (Acts 10.47; Matt 28.19; Mk 16.16).

Like John's baptism, Christian baptism is connected with repentance and forgiveness of sins as well as with a call to escape the eschatological wrath: 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2.38, 41). Christian baptism is therefore not entirely new. It is a continuation of John's baptism. Its association with the gift of the Holy Spirit is also not new, for both 'Holy Spirit and fire' were constitutive elements of John's proclamation (though not of his baptism).⁵⁸⁸ What is new is that it is done in the name of Jesus (Acts 2.38; 8.1-12; 10.47-48; 19.4).

The continuity between the early Church and the Palestinian Baptist movement, which we have argued above, finds support among a number of scholars. For example, Backhaus postulates a broad identity in origin of both the Baptist and the Jesus movements. According to him, in the early stages of its inception, the primitive Church defined and sought to understand itself within the Baptist tradition. The later

⁵⁸⁸ §8.5.

Christian baptism was therefore a reinterpretation of John's baptism in light of the Christ event. Consequently, John was made to appear from the beginning as one looking forward to the Christian baptism: 'Die christliche Taufe war die im Licht des Christus-Ereignisses reinterpetierte Johannestaufe. Die Täufer war, so gesehen, auch der 'Anfang' der christlichen Taufpraxis'.⁵⁸⁹

Similar to the question about fasting (Mk 2.18-22 and par; cf. Q=Matt 11.16-19//Lk 7.31-35 – the earliest component of the Marcan pericope appears to have been 2.18b-19a, either reflecting a setting in Jesus' ministry or a saying (2.19a) with roots in Jesus' ministry)⁵⁹⁰ which depicts the contrast between the ministry of John and Jesus, the early Church appears to distance itself from John's baptismal practice, reinterpreting it in light of the Easter event. Behind this reinterpretation is the tension between the early Church and the Baptist movement. The fundamental difference, however, between the question on fasting and the baptismal praxis is that the latter is nowhere contrasted with Jesus in his earthly ministry, neither is there any hint of it in the debates and controversies of the primitive Church. It is plausible to conclude that Christian baptism was identical with John's baptism from the beginning. Moreover, the reference to Christian baptism as an eschatological penitential sacrament for the remission of sins (Matt 28.19; Lk 24.44-49; Mk 16.16; Acts 1.5; 2.38; 10.47-48; 19.4; cf Mk 1.7-8; Q=Lk 3.16-17//Matt 3.11; John 1.26-27; Acts 13.24-25) has all the essential ingredients of John's baptism (Mk 1.4 and par), except that it now finds its eschatological consummation in the risen Christ.

9.8 Conclusion

Several observations may be drawn from our evaluation of the baptism of Jesus by JB and its aftermath:

⁵⁸⁹ Backhaus, *Jüngerkreis*, p. 332.

⁵⁹⁰ For a discussion of the form, structure and setting of the pericope, see T. A. Burkill, *New Light on the Earliest Gospel: Seven Markan Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 41-42; C. E. Carlston, *The Parables of the Triple Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), pp. 121-24; Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* 1.171-74; J. Dewey, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2.1-3.6* SBLDS 48 (Chico: Scholars, 1980), pp. 89-94; Guelich, *Mark 1-8.26*, pp. 106-17.

(a) It is evident from our analysis that in spite of some redactional modifications by the canonical Gospel writers, the evidence proves that Jesus was baptised by John in the Jordan.

(b) Jesus' submission to John's 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Mk 1.4 and par) proved such an embarrassment for the early Church that there is a subtle attempt by the Gospel writers to distance themselves from it. In the fourth Gospel John's baptism is no more a vehicle for the forgiveness of sins, but one of epiphany and a pointed witness to Jesus' messiahship.

(c) After his baptism Jesus became a member of a narrow circle of the Baptist movement known as 'John's disciples'. Jesus' appearance into the limelight began as a member of this group. It was as a member of this group that Herod and the masses tried to understand him.

(d) Jesus' close relationship with JB is borne out by their concurrent baptising activity in Judea and Samaria respectively. Jesus, in his ministry, authorised baptisms, in the context of John's baptism. The preparation for the transfer of some of John's disciples to Jesus took place during this period. The Gospel writers further attest the close relationship between John and Jesus in terms of the similarities between their messages, as well as Jesus' own positive estimation of John's ministry, despite the differences in the style of their ministries.

(e) Prompted by the arrest of JB, and of his own rejection in Judea by the Pharisees, Jesus moved to Galilee, his homeland, to continue his ministry. Here Jesus was not impeded by the political and strict ecclesiastical constraints of the south. The conflicts and controversies that dogged his Galilean ministry were those of the finer points of current religious practice relating to Jewish law, such as prayer and fasting, sabbath observance, tithes and offerings, food and purity. Jesus' common opponents and critics were the scribes or Pharisees or both. The failure of the Gospel writers to refer to baptism, as well as its absence in the mission discourse, is explained by the fact that it was assumed as something which the disciples were required to perform on their converts, but also probably because of the Evangelists' discomfiture about it.

(f) There is a continuity between the baptisms of John, Jesus and the post-Easter Church. Like John's baptism, Christian baptism is connected with a call to personal piety, repentance and forgiveness of sins, water, and a new existence within the Christian movement. Furthermore, its association with the gift of the Holy Spirit is not entirely new, because John referred to 'a Holy Spirit' as one of the constitutive elements of his proclamation. The new element in Christian baptism is that it is performed in the name of Jesus.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 Preamble

To summarise the individual chapters of this study here would be an unnecessary duplication, since a review may be found in the conclusion of each chapter. Rather, we offer below the main contributions that this study makes, by way of new arguments and new appreciation of the data, to the ongoing quest of the historical Jesus.

10.2 Contributions to Research

In attempting to delineate the kind of relationship that existed between JB and Jesus, we start from the hardly disputable fact that Jesus' ministry began with JB. In the course of working out what the relationship was between John and Jesus and how Jesus was influenced by John, we address the important question of whether Jesus baptised in Galilee. The motivation for this study stems from the realisation that the traditional Christian view of John as a prophet who merely foreran Jesus and then sat down (as it were) is not satisfactory. We then set out to look again at the NT and other evidence (notably the DSS) and to offer a more satisfactory view. Our thesis is that John was much more influential than Christians have often thought, and that Jesus and the early Church were very much heirs of John – continuing and developing his theology and even continuing his baptism. This continuity has been obscured for us in the NT, partly, at least, because of early Church controversy with followers of the Baptist who wanted to see Jesus as subservient and inferior to John; the NT writers therefore tend to stress Jesus' independence of John and the discontinuity between the two men (which is real) more than the continuity.

In approaching the topic, the first part of our argument is via the DSS. We argue the plausibility of the view suggested by a few scholars that after his birth to a priestly family, John was probably raised at Qumran, and that his ideas evolved from that

basis. In the second part we show how much the early Church had in common with Qumran. The affinities between the early Church and Qumran are not coincidental in view of (i) the NT evidence of John's influence on the beginnings of Christianity, and (ii) the fact that the early Church was a Baptist movement. It therefore seems likely that there is a significant continuity from Qumran to John to the early Church.

Given this basis, the third part of the thesis looks more specifically at the NT texts concerning JB and Jesus, trying to show how the two interrelate, with Jesus beginning as a disciple of John, then going beyond his master. In this context we postulate that Jesus continued as a Baptist during his Galilean ministry: we argue that this is simpler and more probable than any other explanation which sees Jesus stopping his baptismal activity, with the Church then resuming it. While the lack of reference to baptism by the synoptists appears curious, we argue: (i) that they probably took it for granted; (ii) that baptism was not among the contentious issues relating to the finer points of Jewish law, such as fasting, sabbath observance, tithes and offerings, food and purity, which the religious authorities accused Jesus of contravening; and more significantly (iii) that the early Church was embarrassed by this aspect of Jesus' ministry and therefore decidedly attempted to distance themselves from it. The level of influence of John on Jesus has been *concealed* by the NT writers, because of their desire to exalt Jesus above JB.

The heuristic value of this study has been (i) to clarify the relationship of early Christianity and Qumran. Over and against those who exaggerate the connections in unlikely ways and those who minimise the connections, this study shows it to be probable that early Christianity, in a real sense, evolved out of Essene Judaism, with which Jesus is in continuity (though just as John moved away from Qumran in certain respects, so even more so did Jesus move away from John – there is sharp discontinuity as well as continuity); (ii) to bring out the importance of John to Jesus: the link between the two men was much closer than has been appreciated. To those who (unwisely) claim Paul rather than Jesus as 'founder' of Christianity, we might

almost offer JB as a better candidate!;⁵⁹¹ and (iii) to throw some light on particular issues in Jesus' ministry, notably the issue of Jesus and baptism: it was part of his ministry, not something that went into remission in the Galilean ministry, only to be revived (or invented) by the early Church. Thus the gap between pre-Easter Christianity and post-Easter Christianity is less than has often been thought – in this respect at least.

⁵⁹¹ D. Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

APPENDIX

JOHN'S BIRTH: ASSESSING THE LUCAN EVIDENCE

1 The Birth of John: Problems with the Infancy Narratives

The study of JB's life has posed an enormous challenge to scholars. Not least are the stories surrounding his birth, as well as the intervening years between his birth and the beginning of his ministry. The difficulty is heightened by the fact that, among the four Gospels, it is only through Luke that we learn of the birth of John.

Luke begins the story of John's birth by referring to it as taking place during the reign of Herod (Lk 1.5). Luke then introduces the *dramatis personae*, Zachariah and Elizabeth, with an account of the circumstances of their life: they are married and both are of priestly descent; they are exemplars in terms of their Torah-piety; but they are childless because Elizabeth is barren; and both are advanced in years (1.5-7).

The story begins to unfold as Zachariah enters the temple to take his place in the ritual ministration of the cult as custom demands (κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς ἱερατείας, 1.9). It is significant to note that nothing at all is said about the actual service that is to be performed. Rather, a familiar OT scene is enacted with the appearance of Gabriel, the angel of the Lord (1.11, 19).⁵⁹² The temple cult is immediately superseded by the visionary experience of Zachariah, in which the divine purposes for his life and that of his wife are made known to him. The angel announces the birth of a son to Zachariah and his wife, with a catalogue of the future accomplishments of the child, as well as specific instructions as to how the child is to be brought up. The response of Zachariah to this divine promise is one of scepticism, because he and his wife have passed child-bearing age. To show Zachariah that this promise would happen according to divine plan, he is struck dumb by the angel until the birth of the son.

The story of Zachariah's encounter with Gabriel, and the subsequent pregnancy of Elizabeth, is interrupted by the account of the appearance of Gabriel to Joseph and

⁵⁹² The appearance of Gabriel here recalls his role as the messenger and interpreter of divine visions and judgments (Dan 8.16-26; 9.21-27).

Mary in Nazareth with the annunciation of the birth of Jesus. This is followed by the meeting of both mothers-to-be in the home of Zachariah (1.26-56). The story of Zachariah and Elizabeth is resumed with the birth of John (1.57-58; cf. verse 13). In faithfulness to Jewish law, the child is circumcised on the eighth day, an act which incorporates him into the covenant with all its obligations (1.59 cf. Gen 17.11-12; Lev 12.3; Gal 5.3). After the naming of John in accordance with the divine specification, Zachariah's curse, which has come about as a result of his initial scepticism, is withdrawn (Lk 1.60-65; cf. verse 20). The impact on all those who witnessed the event and heard of this miracle is enormous. Luke further gives an idea of John's divine destiny by indicating that 'the hand of the Lord was with him' (verse 66).

The impact on Zachariah and his wife is further attested by the Benedictus (verses 67-79), where, like the Nunc Dimittis of Simeon during the presentation of Jesus in the temple (2.22-40), Zachariah praises God in anticipation of the ministry of John. In this action, which is probably a continuation of verse 64, God is blessed for the miracle child, whose prophetic role includes that of a forerunner for the Lord, and the preaching of 'knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins' (verses 67-79). The story concludes with the growth of John in the wilderness until his appearance to Israel (verse 80; cf. 2.40, 52).

The Lucan infancy narratives have posed a number of problems to scholars over the years, not least is the question of their historical reliability.⁵⁹³ In the first place, the infancy narrative of JB, like the parallel account of the birth of Jesus, bears some resemblance to the birth, infancy, and early years of a number of historical figures in the ancient world, both biblical and secular, who supposedly experienced such

⁵⁹³ For a detailed discussion of the problems associated with the infancy narratives in the canonical Gospels, see R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 25-37; —'Gospel Infancy Narrative Research from 1976 to 1986: Part I (Matthew)' and 'Gospel Infancy Narrative Research from 1976 to 1986: Part II (Luke)' *CBQ* 48 (1986), 468-83 and 660-80 respectively; —'Luke's Method in the Annunciation Narratives of Chapter One', in J. D. Flanagan & A. W. Robinson eds., *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honour of J. L. McKenzie* (Missoula: Scholars, 1975), pp. 179-94. For further bibliography, see Nolland, *Luke 1-9.20*, pp. 13-16.

miraculous births.⁵⁹⁴ Notice the close resemblance between the angelic annunciation and miraculous birth of John and the pattern found in the OT, where a number of the patriarchs and heroes, including Isaac, Jacob, Samson, and Samuel are favoured with such stories about their birth.⁵⁹⁵ The common characteristics of such stories include: annunciation of the birth by an angel and/or a dream, the visionary is overwhelmed by fear at the sight of the supernatural manifestation, the sterility of the wife before divine intervention, the visionary is usually addressed by name, prophecies or signs are given concerning the child's future (usually a male child), and the name by which he is to be called, as well as the future deeds and accomplishments of the child.⁵⁹⁶ It does appear that the narratives in their present form came from the hand of an author(s) familiar with the OT birth stories. The narratives have been skilfully composed with a dramatic effect. Stories of such miraculous births seem to continue beyond the NT, as exemplified in Josephus and Philo, as well as in the later midrashim of the rabbis.⁵⁹⁷

Secondly, the above discussion finds support in genre criticism, which has shown that wondrous birth stories or childhood were composed to celebrate heroes of antiquity, in both Greco-Roman and Jewish milieux.⁵⁹⁸

Thirdly, apart from Matthew, who prefixes his work with an infancy narrative about the origins of Jesus, neither the Marcan nor the Johannine Gospel has any such stories. Mark begins his account of the Jesus story with a plain statement: 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus of Christ, the Son of God' (Mk 1.1). This is followed by a brief account of the ministry of John, and then back to the commencement of the public ministry of Jesus. The fourth Evangelist, on the other

⁵⁹⁴ Plutarch narrates the miraculous circumstances surrounding the conception, birth and youth of Alexander the Great in the *Parallel Lives: Alexander* 1-2, 6-7. For an account of similar stories in the birth of Augustus, see Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars: Augustus*, 94.

⁵⁹⁵ Gen 18.1-19; 21.1-7; 25.20-28; Judges 13.1-25; 1 Sam 1.1-21.

⁵⁹⁶ For a detailed discussion of the biblical annunciation of birth see, Brown, *Birth*, pp.155-59.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ant* 2.9.2-3 [205-16]; *Life of Moses*, 1.2-4 [5-7].

⁵⁹⁸ W. Stenger, *Introduction to New Testament Exegesis* trans. D. W. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 52-58; G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* trans. F. McDonagh (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), pp. 119f; C. H. Talbert, 'Prophecies of Future Greatness: The Contributions of Greco-Roman Biographies to an Understanding of Luke 1.5-4.15' in *The Divine Helmsman*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel (NY.: Ktav, 1980), pp. 129-41; G. Erdmann, *Die Vorgeschichten des Lukas- und Matthäusevangeliums und Vergils vierte Ekloge* FRLANT 47 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932), p.8.

hand, prefaces his account of John's ministry with a hymnic prologue, which emphasises the pre-existence and incarnation of Jesus (John 1.1-18).

Fourthly, in the earliest Christian proclamation (κῆρυγμα), fragments of which can be found in the early creeds and hymns of the NT epistles and the sermons of Acts (1 Cor 15.3-4; Rom 1.3-4; 1 Thess 1.9-10; Acts 2.23-24, 32, 36; 3.14-15; 4.10; 10.39b-40), there is no mention of the infancy of Jesus. In fact, the infancy narratives are generally thought to be the latest parts of the Gospel tradition to take shape. Scholarly attempts to reconstruct the developmental stages of the Gospel composition, have increasingly recognised that the passion narratives were the first to have been written, followed by the story of Jesus' ministry – which seems to have come out of the early Christian teaching based on recollections of Jesus' earthly deeds and words. Later on, the infancy narratives were incorporated into the Gospel story. This, perhaps, explains why Mark, probably the earliest known Gospel, lacks an infancy narrative and any resurrection appearances.⁵⁹⁹

Fifthly, it has been noted that the infancy narratives betray a significant Lucan rewriting in the light of his theology. As outlined above, the infancy narrative of John seems to divide into three major parts: (i) the annunciation (1.5-25); (ii) birth, circumcision, and naming (1.57-66); and (iii) Zachariah's exultation and prophetic greeting of his baby boy (1.67-80). Interspersed among these sections are the infancy narratives of Jesus: (i) the annunciation of Jesus' birth (1.26-38); (ii) the visit of Mary to her cousin Elisabeth, the mother of John (1.39-56). Thus, it appears that the infancy narratives of both John and Jesus are placed side by side, ostensibly to show the respective roles of both figures in the divine plan of salvation. The John–Jesus parallelism is meant to show further that there is no rivalry between them, though there is a subtle attempt in the infancy narratives to highlight the superiority of Jesus to John.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁹ Notice that the longer ending of Mark (16.9-20) is not found in the best known manuscripts of the Greek NT, including A, \aleph , B, etc; Brown, *Birth*, pp. 26-29.

⁶⁰⁰ Wink, *John the Baptist*, p. 59;

2. The Function of the Infancy Narratives in Luke's Gospel

In addition to this close parallelism between the two figures, the infancy narratives in both Luke and Matthew also act as a gateway into the Gospel proper, by giving an overview of their account of the Jesus story. In spite of the thesis by Conzelmann and others that Luke's infancy narratives play no role, or are unconnected to the main thought in Luke-Acts,⁶⁰¹ they in fact introduce the theme which is to be elaborated in the main body of the Gospel, as well as in Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles. Apart from encountering Jesus, the protagonist, and his forerunner, John, in the infancy narratives, the reader is further introduced to some of the main theological perspectives that are foundational for the entire Lucan Gospel. Luke 1 and 2 communicate the angelic and prophetic statements which would guide the story line of the Gospel narrative. Moreover, the pervasive religious experiences of the Spirit – joy, worship and confession – which find expression in the body of the Gospel, seem to be largely the products of early Christian reflection on the salvific significance of Jesus Christ in light of OT prophecies.

Luke establishes the beginning of his account in the heartland of Jewish piety attached to the temple. Zachariah, John's father, is a priest who faithfully discharges his duties in the temple. Luke presents Zachariah and Elizabeth as exemplary law-abiding Jews (1.5-9). This Torah-piety, which centres on the temple, acts like a compass to guide the infancy narratives. It was in the temple that the angel, Gabriel appeared to Zachariah (1.11). It is instructive to note the part played by the temple in the parallel account of the birth and later ministry of Jesus (cf. 2.22, 40-51). The whole Gospel account begins and ends in the temple (cf. 24.53). Jesus' trial and

⁶⁰¹ Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, p. 118; W.B. Tatum, 'The Epoch of Israel: Luke i-ii and the Theological Plan of Luke-Acts', *NTS* 13 (1966-67), 184-95. Others have argued for an integration of the infancy narratives within the overall structure of Luke's work. See P. S. Minear, 'Luke's Use of the Birth Stories', in *Studies in Luke-Acts* ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (London: SPCK, 1978), pp. 111-30; H. H. Oliver, 'The Lucan Birth Stories and the Purpose of Luke-Acts', *NTS* 10 (1963-64), 202-26. In an insightful comparison between Lk 1-2 and Acts 1-2, Brown has noted that both chapters are foundational apropos what happens in the respective books; Brown, *Birth*, pp. 242-43; Nolland, *Luke 1-9.20*, pp. 17-36.

execution are portrayed within the context of his temple teaching ministry (21.37-38). Similarly, in the Book of Acts the temple is a focus of Christian loyalty (2.26.21).⁶⁰²

Furthermore, by the use of OT allusion, the third Evangelist suggests that the events of John's beginnings are to be understood in the context of God's action in the past on behalf of his people. John's birth is given an eschatological setting within existing Jewish piety (1.17, 77, cf. Mal 4.5; Mk 1.6 and par; Matt 11.14; 17.12; John 1.25). John is part of the eschatological hour to which belongs the time of the Gospel. Moreover, the third Evangelist here indicates that all the subsequent events will transpire under the initiative and guidance of God, with John as part of God's scheme in the plan of salvation.

3. The Usefulness of the Infancy Narratives for Historical Study

In light of the above observations about the Lucan emphasis, serious questions have been raised about the historical reliability of the infancy narratives. The question is: can anything be said in defence of the antiquity of these traditions?

In the first place it is significant that Luke is not the only Evangelist who prefaces his work with an infancy narrative, Matthew also prefixing his Gospel with a narrative about the origins of Jesus (Matt 1-2). Secondly, both Evangelists agree on some significant details in the infancy narratives of Jesus. A few examples here will suffice to highlight this point: (i) both Evangelists agree that Jesus was born during the reign of Herod (Matt 2.1; Lk 1.5); (ii) that Mary was engaged to Joseph as a virgin, but they were not yet living together (Matt 1.18; Lk 1.27, 34; 2.5); (iii) that Joseph was of the house of David (Matt 1.16, 20; Lk 1.27; 2.4); (iv) both write about the angelic annunciation of the birth of Jesus, his conception through the Holy Spirit, and the divine name specified for him (Matt 1.18-21; Lk 1.28-31, 34-35); (v) that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but was brought up in his home town of Nazareth by Mary and Joseph (Matt 2.1, 22-23; Lk 2.4-7, 39, 51). This double attestation is very significant in the sense that each version may act as a control for the other.

⁶⁰² For a discussion of the significance of the temple in the death of Jesus, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 61-116, 245-317.

In spite of the above agreement, there are some discrepancies between the two Evangelists, which are difficult to reconcile: (i) the angelic annunciation is said to have been made to Mary and Joseph in Luke and Matthew respectively (Lk 1.26-38; Matt 1.20-25); (ii) Matthew's narrative includes a genealogy which is absent from Luke (Matt 1.1-17); (iii) Luke does not mention the visit of the Magi, the flight to Egypt, the slaughter of all the male infants under the age of two, and the subsequent return from Egypt (cf. Matt 2.1-23; Luke has a different genealogy from that of Matthew, Lk 3.23-38); (iv) there is no reference in Matthew to the song of Mary (the Magnificat), nor the song of Zachariah (the Benedictus), the census of Quirinius, the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Simeon, Anna, and Jesus' wisdom at age twelve, which confounds the religious authorities in the temple (Lk 1.45-56, 67-79; 2.1-5, 22-52).⁶⁰³

It is worth noting that the above discrepancies do not necessarily argue against the historicity of these traditions. They may highlight the interest of each Evangelist. It appears that the name Zachariah may reflect an anthological style by Luke, though there is no justification to assume a confusion between the priestly Zachariah in 1 and 2 Chronicles and the minor prophet whose name bears the OT book of Zechariah.⁶⁰⁴ However, the Lucan notion that John came from a priestly home, and also grew up in the wilderness, could be part of the historical elements incorporated into the Lucan narrative (Lk 1.5, 80). The priestly origin also provides a link with the temple.

Similarly, the Lucan evidence that John lived in the wilderness until his public appearance, is augmented by a further suggestion that he received his instructions for his ministry during his wilderness habitation (Lk 3.2). John's attachment to the wilderness both before and during his ministry is testified by Mark, Q and the fourth Evangelist (Mk 1.4-5; Matt 3.1-2; Q=Matt 11.7//Lk 7.24; John 1.23, 28). The evidence seems to suggest that John's priestly origin and his wilderness associations could be historical elements within the Lucan infancy narratives.

⁶⁰³ For a discussion of some of the ingenious solutions to these discrepancies, see Brown, *Birth*, pp. 33-37; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, pp. 307-9. For an argument that Luke created the infancy narratives without documentary sources, see M. D. Goulder and M. L. Sanderson, 'St Luke's Genesis', *JTS* 8 [new series] (1957), 12-30.

⁶⁰⁴ Goulder and Sanderson, 'St. Luke's Genesis', 12-30; Brown, *Birth*, p. 258.

The narratives in their present format betray a strong Semitic background, which suggests that they may derive from a Hebraic source, though some posit an Aramaic source.⁶⁰⁵ The Lucan infancy narratives, in particular, seem to exhibit a greater degree of Hebraic style than the rest of the Gospel material.⁶⁰⁶ This observation argues against a Hellenistic background to the essential motifs in Luke's infancy narratives.⁶⁰⁷

The question that poses itself in this connection is whether one can talk of a pre-Lucan source or a plurality of sources that Luke has reworked in his own style into the infancy narratives.⁶⁰⁸ Three main sources have been proposed: (i) A special documentary source for the canticles, i.e., the Magnificat (1.45-55), the Benedictus (1.67-79), the Gloria in Excelsis (2.13-14), and the Nunc Dimittis (2.29-32). These hymns, which were originally thought to have been composed in Hebrew, are now believed to have reached Luke in Greek.⁶⁰⁹ (ii) Some argue for a different source for the various units in chapter 2, e.g., 2.1-20, 22-39, 41-51. (iii) Yet others posit another source for the JB and Jesus stories in Luke 1. For example, it has been suggested that a Baptist source contained the story of the annunciation of the birth of JB, his circumcision and manifestation (1.5-25, 57-66). This source is sometimes thought to have had Christian origins, though the general impression is that it was composed by

⁶⁰⁵ P. Winter, 'Some Observations on the Language in the Birth and Infancy Stories of the Third Gospel', *NTS* 1 (1954-55), 111-21; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, pp. 50-52. For the argument in favour of an Aramaic source, see M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* 3rd edn. (Oxford: OUP, 1967), pp. 151-56. According to Marshall, however, there is little if any material evidence for an Aramaic background to the Lucan infancy narrative. Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, p. 46. For an important recent discussion of possible sources, see S. Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning, and Significance* JSNTSup 9 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), esp. pp. 14-98.

⁶⁰⁶ Riesner, 'Luke's Special Tradition', 44-51.

⁶⁰⁷ It is further suggested that since Luke moved in an environment shaped by the Septuagint, it is likely that he would have been affected by, at least, some of the prevailing influences of such an atmosphere. This may explain why the infancy narratives of Luke, which bear a close similarity, in both style and language, to the OT birth stories, are replete with Septuagintal terminology. See I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* 3rd edn. (London: Paternoster, 1970), pp. 96-97.

⁶⁰⁸ Brown, *Birth*, pp. 244-45; Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, pp. 47-49.

⁶⁰⁹ R. A. Aytoun, 'The Ten Lucan Hymns of the Nativity in their Original Language', *JTS* 18 [old series] (1916-17), 274-88; Brown, 'Luke's Method in the Annunciation Narratives', in *No Famine*, pp. 179-94.

the followers of JB.⁶¹⁰ Others posit a pre-Gospel tradition of an angelic annunciation of the birth of Jesus as the Davidic messiah.⁶¹¹

The conclusion of the above considerations is that both Luke and Matthew probably made independent use of sources in the composition of their infancy narratives, since there is no evidence to suggest that they copied from each other's work. As they composed their narratives on the basis of the information from these sources, both incorporated into their structure a number of OT motifs for a variety of effects. For example, Matthew, after the introductory genealogy (Matt 1.1-17), seems to break his infancy narrative into five episodes, with each climaxing in a fulfilment formula based on an OT quotation (Matt 1.18-25; 2.1-12, 13-15, 16-18, 19-23). Luke, on the other hand, seems more interested in achieving a parallelism of scenes between John and Jesus. As noted above, in the scheme of Luke, one can hardly fail to note that both John and Jesus are agents in the divine plan of salvation.

We may now pull together all the different strands of the ongoing discussion in an attempt to find out the purpose of the infancy narratives in the Lucan Gospel outline. It has been suggested by some that the Lucan infancy narratives of John are to be seen as an apologetic against the non-Christian followers of John, who would not acknowledge Jesus as the messiah. As a result of this Luke describes John as affirming the superiority of Jesus even before the latter's birth (Lk 1.41-45). While this is possible, it has, however, been criticised by Fitzmyer, who argues that this interpretation fails to take cognisance of the preface to the entire Lucan work.⁶¹²

Similarly, Brown suggests that the infancy narratives were written in response to the unbelief of Judaism regarding the idea of a messiah who would come from Galilee (John 7.41-42, 52). It is also possible that the Evangelists wrote to answer the charge that Jesus was born illegitimate (John 8.41; cf. Mk 6.3 and par).⁶¹³ Our analysis

⁶¹⁰ It is assumed that these followers were anti-Christian, who rejected Jesus as the messiah in favour of the Baptist. Bammel, 'The Baptist in Early Christian Tradition', *NTS* 18 (1971-72), 95-128.

⁶¹¹ For further discussion, see Brown, *Birth* (New edn., 1993), pp. 235-329; A. R. C. Leaney, *The Gospel According to St Luke* BNTC (London: Adam & C. Black, 1958), pp. 20-27; Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 294-301.

⁶¹² Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, p. 289.

⁶¹³ Brown, *Birth*, pp. 28-29, 534-42.

above indicates that Luke is at pains to stress the superiority of Jesus, and to show that both John and Jesus are key agents in the divine scheme of salvation. A combination of apologetic and theological factors, particularly that of Christology, seems to explain why the infancy narratives were composed and prefaced to the Gospel.⁶¹⁴

With this background, we may now attempt to find out how far the Lucan infancy narratives can help us to understand the relationship between John and Jesus.

4. The Infancy Narratives and the Relationship between John and Jesus

Here, too, certainty eludes us and our solution must remain, by and large, tentative and speculative. We assume that Luke composed the infancy narratives on the basis of information from a variety of sources. It is, however, likely that Luke modelled the annunciation of John's birth on a pre-Gospel tradition of angelic annunciation of the birth of Jesus as the Davidic messiah. Recalling the scholarly consensus that the infancy narratives were the last part of the Gospel material to be written, there is reason to think that Luke would here include a summary of some of the traditions already incorporated in the main body of the Gospel. For example, we have shown that after his baptism by John, Jesus remained attached to John's movement for an unspecified period as a disciple, conducting the rite of baptism which had the hallmark of his master. The relations between the two figures was such that after the execution of John, many of his disciples turned to Jesus. Like John, Jesus also died a martyr's death. It appears that the harmony between John and Jesus was so strong that the Gospel writers could not help but retain the memory of John in their records.⁶¹⁵

The historical figure of John and his apparent pre-eminence over Jesus was a source of problem for the early Church's doctrine of Jesus' sinlessness and Christology.⁶¹⁶ Consequently, there was a subtle attempt by the early Church to

⁶¹⁴ For a recent discussion of the Christology of the Lucan infancy narrative, see M. Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lucan Narrative: Narrative as Christology in Luke 1-2* JSNTSup 88. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Fitzmyer, *Luke 1-IX*, pp. 192-219.

⁶¹⁵ For detailed discussion of the points made in this paragraph, see chapters 2, 8-9 above.

⁶¹⁶ See §9.2 above.

subordinate John to Jesus, and to stress John's role as a forerunner of Jesus through an exegesis of Mal 3.1, 23 and Isa 40.3-4.

The fourth Gospel represents another step in the early Church's effort to define itself in relation to the other groups in Judaism about the end of the first century. At this stage the gulf between John's inferiority and Jesus' superiority had begun to widen. In a series of self-effacing statements, John disclaims that he is the light, the Christ, Elijah or the prophet (John 1.8, 20-21). Rather his main role is a witness *par excellence* to Jesus (John 1.7). The fourth Evangelist underlines the pre-eminence of Jesus by linking his Christology a step back from Jesus' incarnation to his pre-existence. The Evangelist further alludes to the problem relating to the significance of JB for the early Church at this stage in the theological development of the Gospel tradition. For example, in the Lucan infancy narratives JB and Jesus are portrayed as relatives (Lk 1.36), whereas in the fourth Gospel JB did not know Jesus until JB was called to witness to him (John 1.31).

The implication of the above apologetics is that if the memory of the historical relationship between JB and Jesus had not been well embedded in the tradition, it is very likely that it would have been excised from the Gospel material.⁶¹⁷ Brown may well be right when he observes:

Such Christian theological developments regarding JBap are reflected in the Lucan infancy narrative in a most graceful way. If the Fourth Gospel has moved the christological moment (i.e., the moment of the revelation of who Jesus is) back to the incarnation of the pre-existent Word (1:14), Luke has moved it back to the virginal conception (1:35). If the Fourth Gospel has JBap prepare the way for the incarnation, Luke has the conception of JBap prepare the way for the conception of Jesus. Subordination is preserved because the miraculous element in Jesus' conception (without a male parent) will be greater than in JBap's conception (aged, barren parents). When the two pregnant mothers meet, Elizabeth will praise Mary as 'the mother of my Lord'; and JBap will add his testimony by jumping with gladness in Elizabeth's womb (1:41-45). There is no rivalry between the two figures in salvation history since God sends the same angel Gabriel to announce both conceptions.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁷ Bammel, 'The Baptist in the Early Christian Tradition', *NTS* 18 (1971-72), 95-128.

⁶¹⁸ Brown, *Birth* (New edn.), pp. 284-85.

5. Conclusion

There are serious questions about the historicity of the infancy narratives in both Luke and Matthew. There are also grave discrepancies between the accounts of the two Evangelists and any attempt to reconcile them is not only superfluous, but futile and gratuitous. Evidently both Evangelists did not set out to write a biography in the modern sense of the word. Nevertheless, it is clear that both had access to a variety of traditions, which they combined in their own way to dramatic effect.

It appears that Luke composed his infancy narratives to achieve a parallelism between JB and Jesus. We have argued that the presentation of John's origins from a priestly family, as well as his attachment to the wilderness, both before and during his ministry, could be historical elements within the Lucan infancy narratives. Luke wrote with a background of historical information that, after his baptism by John, Jesus may have identified so closely with John's movement that he even became one of his disciples. Thus in spite of its problems, the Lucan infancy narratives attest a historical relationship between John and Jesus.

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